

**Institution for Christian Teaching  
Education Department Of Seventh Day Adventists**

**PRACTICAL RESEARCH ON POVERTY  
A CASE STUDY AT BUGEMA UNIVERSITY**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Hunger and poverty have existed in the world almost since the beginning of times. Records of poverty in the Bible can be traced as early as the time of prophet Elijah when God used him to help a widow and her son (1 Kings 17:8-16).

Poor people are always around us although many times we think of them being in other countries far away from us. Nearly all people throughout all history have been poor.

Poverty allows us to realize the importance of caring for others in need and to change our attitudes and actions toward people. Psalms 146: 5-7 tells us that poverty can give us happiness from the opportunity we get to give food to the hungry.

### ***Definition of poverty***

Poverty is defined in many ways but I will consider the following two definitions:

1. World book (1994) defines poverty as a state or fact of being in want. This definition considers the lack of not only food, but also resources to live adequately by the accepted living standards of the community in question.
2. Vicky Allsopp (1995) defines Poverty as the result of unlimited wants sets against limited resources and time. I.e. a biological need for food, clothing and shelter arranged on the basis of a hierarchy of wants.

### ***Effects of Poverty***

1. Poverty causes suffering among millions of people who cannot eat the foods they need to be healthy or to receive good medical-care when they are ill.
2. Poverty deprives the victims from community influence as businesses are only

interested in people who buy their goods and services.

3. Poverty brings despair, anger and lack of interest in anything except ones own worries.

### ***Measurement of poverty***

Poverty can be measured by using one of the following methods:

1. Per capita income: In 1980, 39 developing nations had a per capita income of less than \$425 US and 35 percent of these people were living in Sub-Saharan Africa. (World Book 1994)
2. . Poverty Line: This is an income below which people are considered to be poor. In 1998, the Poverty line in USA was \$12,000 for a family of 4.
3. Share of national income: In Japan, 37 percent of the national income was owned by 20 percent of the rich households and only 4 percent of the income was owned by the poor households. (World book 1994)
4. Proportion of households living in rural areas: 40 percent of the population in Africa live in rural areas. World book 1994)

### **5. Causes of Poverty**

There are many causes of poverty but for the purpose of the essay I will concentrate on the following:

1. **Unemployment:** Unemployment refers to a state of being without work but currently available for employment and seeking it. According to ILO Statistics (1989-90) only about 5.9 percent of the population in Sub-Sahara Africa had employment whereas the figure for UK during the same time was 46 percent of the total population. Unemployment leads to economic hardships leading to lack of means for livelihood and thus poverty. Further more unemployment leads to loss of self-esteem as the unemployed are often judged as not wanting to work or to be lazy.
2. **Overpopulation:** Overpopulation refers to a state of having too many people in relation to the available resources. This leads to a loss of the means of livelihood and thus poverty. Despite poverty prevalence in low-income countries they also have a higher population growth rate compared to high-income countries. According to Allan and Thomas (1992) the total population in 1990 amounted to over 5 billion people and nearly 80 percent of these was found in low-income countries.
3. **Environmental Degradation:** This refers to systematic damage on the environmental which causes a limit to growth. It could be due to soil erosion, pollution or simply resource depletion. If not checked environmental degradation could result into a rather sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity to produce. It is therefore one of the major causes of poverty.
4. **Lack of equity:** Lack of equity exists because women have suffered from male domination in education, land distribution, and access to credit and even in employment. This state of affair increases poverty because despite the existence of investment opportunities for women participation in economic development is very marginal. This is because most of the time they are trapped within a web of tradition valves which assigns a very high valve to childbearing compared to anything else they do. (Geyndit 1996).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Poverty is a serious problem in Uganda because this country is rated as the fourteenth poorest country the world (Child survival project Kampala District 1997). For this reason even the area surrounding Bugema University is also suffering from poverty.

As an attempt to integrate faith and learning at Bugema University, Business students of the course Legal and Social Environment of Business made a survey on the extent and causes of poverty around the Bugema Campus during the academic year 1997\1998. Using a participant observer survey, the students were able to appreciate the existence of poverty and identify a number of its causes.

### **Purpose of this essay**

This essay has two main purposes: First to act as an example of how faith can be included in teaching at Christian colleges through practical research on poverty.

Secondly to suggest ways in which Christianity can be used to reduce the level of poverty.

### **Significance of this essay**

This essay is significant in two main ways: First it will sensitize Christian college students on the need for them to recognize their social and religious responsibility in identifying and taking active role in solving community problems such as poverty.

Secondly it will cultivate creative integration of faith and learning in Christian colleges that result in fruitful and practical union as suggested by Arthur Homes (1975).

### **Composition of the essay**

The essay is divided into three main parts:

1. Part one looks at the introduction, a general background to the concept of poverty and a

statement on the purpose and significance of the essay.

2. Part two looks at the conceptual and applied aspects of the essay both in theory and practice.
3. Part three deals with the summary of the main points of the arguments and their relation to Adventist Education.

#### **Teaching faith through practical research at Bugema University**

After undertaking a practical survey on the extent and causes of poverty at Bugema University neighborhood, the University students were able to conceptualize poverty in their learning experience identified the course of poverty in the community surrounding their campus and suggest as Christians they could contribute towards reducing the poverty incidence.

#### ***Causes of poverty in the communities surrounding Bugema University***

According to the student survey, the following were the major causes of poverty:

1. **Immorality:** It was found that immorality was one of the causes of poverty. This is mainly associated with poor sexual behavior, which can cause AIDS and STD the result of which is to weaken or cause death to the working population. In their survey the students were informed that, some women were using sex in difficult circumstances in order to survive. Immorality was also caused by the existence of polygamy in some households.
2. **Extravagant Ceremonies:** Expensive weddings and funerals could be one of the causes of the existing poverty. With the influence of modernization, modern wedding and funeral ceremonies have turned out to be very expensive. The poor and the rich alike are competing for elegant ceremonies. This causes the majority of the people to incur a lot of debts forcing them to sell their fixed assets or even turn to evil means like stealing.
3. **Negative attitudes towards work:** This was considered to be a common problem especially among the educated population (with at least secondary school education)

who are aspiring to white collar jobs. Many of these people loiter around and consume without adding anything on top of the existing resources thus perpetuating poverty.

3. **Excessive use of alcohol:** Some of the inhabitants in the community around Bugema spend too much money and time drinking alcohol. This habit leads them into poverty because it deprives them of their money and time, which if invested properly would have gained them profitable business ventures.
  
5. **Lack of Skills:** Lack of skills is compounded by low level of education and training. Poverty generates poverty. The fact that large part of the population is suffering from poverty, makes them lack education and skills. It is sad to say that a large proportion of students at the Bugema schools came from far away. Only an insignificant part of the primary, secondary and university students come from local community. The reason for this is that due to poverty the majority of our close neighbors cannot afford to pay the fees charged.
  
6. **Lack of Goals:** Lack of goals was also considered to be a problem within the community. A good evidence of this is the existence of several unutilized pieces of land, which could have been used for economic activities.
  
7. **Unrecognized Opportunities:** According to the survey some members of the Bugema community are poor because they lack information about various business opportunities which they could have undertaken. For example there are two micro- financing institutions in the neighborhood giving loans for business, but the population using them is less than two thousand out of fifty thousand people living in the neighborhood. Further more opportunities of producing non- traditional crops such as flowers exist but there is only one foreign owned company engaged in growing and exporting flowers in this area.
  
8. **Ignorance about Family planning:** ADRA Uganda has recently concluded a child survival

project (1997) in the sub-counties surrounding Bugema. The Projects included family Planning as one of its components. At the beginning of the project, contraceptive use was fairly low. Most mothers were not using Family Planning methods (ADRA report 1997). After the report a number of users had increased but the students in their research still found people who did not believe in using modern Family planning methods and were producing many children for security and prestigious reasons. According to World Bank technical report, family size and the number of children survey, poor families tend to be relatively large.

### ***Suggested Remedies for Poverty***

The students in their survey found out that there is a close relationship between poverty and lack of religious faith. This means that remedies should take a Christian approach. Two main approaches suggested in this essay include the following:

#### **1. Breaking negative cultural ties through Education.**

Examples of negative ties, which can be broken through education, include:

- a) **Expensive funerals and weddings:** Traditionally these ceremonies were very simple but with modernization they have tended to be very expensive to the extent that they cause poverty to many households. Weddings for example emphasize looks rather than the purpose for them. Funerals on the other hand, are considered as the end to human life and ignore the fact that according to John 11:26 believers in Jesus Christ live even though they die and thus do not need expensive burial materials or do not have to be buried in special places like home villages if it is too expensive for the family.
  
- b) **Polygamy:** Polygamy is a state in which a man marries more than one woman. This means the resources the household would have enjoyed are distributed between several mouths. Discouraging polygamy will help to increase resources available to the household and in addition, will encourage the existence of love within the family

and the need to care for one another.

- c) **Immorality:** As Christians we should discourage immorality. Colossians 3:5 orders us to put to death whatever belongs to our earthly nature including sexual immorality and other impurities. Avoiding immorality is not only an order from God, but also it's for our own good. If we practice immorality, we subject ourselves to killer diseases such as AIDS, which reduce our capacity to produce, and perpetuates poverty.

## 2 Value Development

Arthur Holmes (1975) urges that value development is a resource that must not be underrated. By encouraging the fear of the Lord at the college, the communities around us will look to us as models and reformers of the society in general. Furthermore, John Fowler (1998) states that a teacher is an ambassador or a personal representative of God and the values he or she transmits will direct the minds of the students to God's revelation of himself. Examples of value development, which we can emphasize, are hard work, honesty, love and reliability.

- a) **Hard work:** It is important that Christians work hard. In proverbs 10:3 we read that the Lord does not let the righteous go hungry but again proverbs 10:4 tells us that, as righteous people, we also have a responsibility because lazy hands make a man poor but diligent hands bring wealth.
- b) **Honesty:** Just like we are required to be hardworking we are also required to be honest. Ephesians 4:25 tells us that we should put off falsehood and speak truthfully to our neighbors for we are all members of one body. By being honest we will encourage one another in communities. This will increase output and thus reduce poverty.

- c) Love: Proverbs 10:12 tells us that, love covers over all wrongs. By encouraging love in our communities, people will work together and forget all the wrongs they got from each other and this will stimulate development and reduce poverty.**
- d) Reliability: Being reliable means being trusted. This includes among other things the sense of proper time management. We will avoid loss of valuable time, which can be used for production. Time Management will also transform the behaviors of the population and influence their relationship with God. I.e. it will encourage setting aside time for prayers.**

### **CONCLUSION**

**This Essay is a first attempt to integrate faith and learning through poverty reduction at the Department of Business Studies in Bugema University.**

**A participant observer survey was used to get a feel of the extent and causes of poverty in the communities surrounding the Bugema University campus.**

**The results of this survey were used to show an example of how Faith can be taught through practical examples like a research in poverty. This was followed by an attempt to suggest possible remedies taking into account a Christian perspective.**

**Among the causes of poverty cited were immorality, polygamy, and negative attitudes towards work, excessive use of alcohol and ignorance about family planning. The suggested broad remedies for this poverty were first education and second, value development. Bearing these in mind, Faith and learning experience can be taught using the following:**

- 1. Spelling out concise philosophy, set of goals and essential learning for each area of study. For example, if we want to discourage immorality or excessive use of alcohol we should focus our eyes on learning health related concepts such as the fact that our bodies are temples of God in which the Holy Spirit dwells. Similarly when we want to discourage ignorance about family planning we should emphasise a healthy life style and knowledge of health and fitness which allow positive models glorifying God.**
- 2. As far as value development is concerned, we should try to inculcate certain basic values to the communities concerned. These include values like honesty, trust, love, reliability and the like. This could be done in conjunction with business training in community programs such as Entrepreneurship skills. According to George Marsden (1977) we can practice Christian scholarship in all academic disciplines**

**and student surveys such as this, could act as a valuable instrument in promoting Christian scholarship.**

**Subject to availability of funds our Business Department intends to continue with further research on this topic using statistical Analysis and for this reason a proposed questionnaire for the second phase of this research is attached to solicit further ideas and assistance from well wishers.**

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**THE BIBLE**

- (a) 1 KINGS 17:8-16
- (b) PSALMS 72
- (c) PSALMS 142
- (d) PSALMS 146:7
- (e) MARK 6:30-34
- (f) NEHEMIAH 5:1-11

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**BUGEMA UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

**PROPOSED QUESTIONNAIRE ON POVERTY RESEARCH**

Your cooperation in this research project is requested to help us gain greater knowledge and insight into the causes and extent of poverty around Bugema University.

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Serial No. \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION A**

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Please check or fill in answers as appropriate to each question.

1) Gender: Male  Female

2) Age: 15 - 30Years   
30 - 50 Years   
Over 50 Years

3) (a) Marital Status: Single   
Married   
Separated   
Divorced   
Widowed

(b) For those who are married; is the marriage:  
Monogamous  Polygamous

(c) At what age did you get married? \_\_\_\_\_

(d) If you were to get married, what type of wedding would you prefer?

- i) Expensive wedding
- ii) Average wedding
- iii) Simple wedding

4) Occupation:

Are you: Salaried  or self employed

5) Level of education:

What is the highest education level you have attained?

- i) Primary level
- ii) Ordinary level
- iii) Institutional level
- iv) Graduate level

6) Level of income:

On which income (per month) range do you fall?

- i) Shs. 17,000 - 50,000
- ii) Shs. 50,000 - 100,000
- iii) Shs. 100,000 - 150,000
- iv) Above 150,000

7) Spending habits

How do you spend most of your income?

- i) Do you save it
- ii) Do you consume it
- iii) Do you invest it

## 8) Religious affiliation

- i) Christian
- ii) Non-Christian

**SECTION B**

## 1) Residential Status

## (a) For the most part of your life, have you lived

- i) On farms in the countryside?
- ii) In small towns?
- iii) In large towns?

## (b) How long have you been living in this locality?

- i) Less than five years
- ii) Five years and above
- iii) The rest of my life

## 2) Work habits

## a) How do you spend most of your time?

- i) Working in the farm
- ii) Working in salaried employment
- iii) Working on self employment
- iv) Pursuing casual jobs
- v) Doing nothing
- vi) Others (specify).....