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**THE ROLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN POVERTY
ALLEVIATION: THE CASE OF KOPANONG MUNICIPALITY, FREE
STATE**

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DECLARATION

I, **Molikeng Augustinus Lebofa**, student number 2009101300, hereby declare that the mini-dissertation titled “The role of the Catholic Church in poverty alleviation: The case of Kopanong Municipality, Free State,” submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Masters in Development Studies degree at the University of the Free State, is my own work and has not previously been submitted to any other institution of higher learning. I further declare that all sources cited or quoted are indicated and acknowledged in a comprehensive list of references.

A. M. LEBOFA

A. M. Lebofa

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to the Lebofa and Lenkoane family, for their support and encouragement from the beginning to the end. My father, Azael Sekhoane Lebofa; my mother, Magdalena 'Malefu Lebofa; my sisters: Mokholutsoane – 'Mapheello Mohale, 'Mantopi Lebofa and Nthabiseng Ditshego - Lebofa; my brothers: Lefu and Pule Bosman Martin de Porres Lebofa (may their souls rest in peace); and Thabo Lebofa.

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ABSTRACT

The Catholic Church throughout the world has a long and eventful history in poverty alleviation, through works of charity and development in fulfilment of its mission of advocacy and adherence to the Catholic Social Teaching option for the poor. Kopanong Local Municipality is one of the rural municipalities in South Africa in which a number of poverty alleviation strategies have been implemented. Despite these strategies, however, poverty seems to be on the rise. This study's aim was to further understand the role of the Catholic Church in poverty alleviation in Kopanong Local Municipality in the Free State. Through a review of literature, interviews and focus group discussions, the study was able to find that the Catholic Church, through its strategies and programmes such as Rural Development Support programmes, the Rural Education Access Programme, and other charitable works, has to some extent managed to help the poor. However, it is through a better understanding of poverty and poverty alleviation, and through the implementation of social justice programmes and the improvement of social development programmes, that the Catholic Church could effectively improve livelihoods.

Keywords: Catholic Church, poverty alleviation, human-centred development, empowerment, sustainability, municipality.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASGISA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSA	Caritas South Africa
DRDLR	Department of Rural Development and Land Reform
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Program
FBO	Faith-based Organisation
GEAR	Growth, Empowerment and Redistribution
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LED	Local Economic Development
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRASD	South African National Religious Association for Social Development
NSDP	National Spatial Development Perspective
NSF	National Spatial Framework
POJF	Participatory Occupational Justice Framework
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RSDP	Rural Support Development Programmes

SACC	South African Council of Churches
SACBC	Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEED-SCALE	Self-Evaluation for Effective Decision Making - Stimulating Community Awareness, Learning and Energy
SP	Strategic Integrated Projects
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WFDD	World Faiths Development Dialogue

CHAPTER 1 :

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The alleviation of poverty and hunger has been the central focus of the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Leading up to the Rio summit in 2012, the United Nations adopted SDGs to move the world to a sustainable trajectory (Sachs, 2012). The UN, at the Rio summit, reiterated that poverty alleviation needed worldwide participation. The UN further decided that by 2030 all people should have equal rights to economic resources, and that member countries or states should implement programmes and policies to alleviate poverty in all its dimensions (Sachs, 2012; UN, 2015). The South African government has implemented policies and programmes to alleviate poverty since the dawn of democracy. However, poverty persists, especially in rural areas where people are socio-economically deprived (De Beer & De Beer, 2011; Swart, 2010) due to limited education, unemployment and lack of resources (Stats SA, 2017; Tamasane & Head, 2012).

In the closing decades of the twentieth century, because of the expanded need for humanitarianism, several development actors have turned their attention to “religious organisations in their search of new means for providing basic social services and the advancement of particular agendas of development through non-state actor interventions” (Bolotta *et al.*, 2019:244). However, helping the poor and the marginalised in many religions is a form of lived faith (Ali & Hatta, 2014). Nieman (in Swart *et al.*, 2010) states that the Church in South Africa is one of the biggest institutions and should take a wider view of its role since the church ministers to 84% of the population, which in many instances comprises poor, underdeveloped people lacking resources. On the other hand, Lunn (2009) says that the Church can play a vital role in development. However, the Catholic Church is one of the mainline churches whose world leaders, through several encyclicals, have been conscious of the gap between the poor and the rich and have called all people of goodwill through brotherhood, solidarity, and empathy to alleviate poverty (Geest, 2020). This paper,

therefore, seeks to investigate the role that the Catholic Church can play in Kopanong Municipality to fight unemployment and alleviate poverty.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to the 2017 Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) data, between 2006 and 2011, poverty was on the rise in South Africa. In 2015, poverty levels rose even higher, making more than half of South Africans poorer, with the poverty headcount increasing to 55,5% from a low of 53,2% in 2011 due to low economic growth. As a result, the financial health of South African households declined under this economic weight pressure, pulling more households and individuals down into poverty, especially black South Africans, children, women and people in rural areas. To alleviate poverty and to create an enabling environment for proper service delivery, the Kopanong Municipality has linked together both Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and Local Economic Development (LED) initiatives (Kopanong Local Municipality, 2017).

However, due to outmigration, long term unemployment and poverty, the municipality is experiencing cash flow challenges. According Mashiri (2016) the unemployment rate varied from 22% to 31% among the youth in 2012. The failure of the municipality to alleviate poverty necessitates the involvement of all stakeholders and institutions. Given the extent of their influence in the past, local churches seem to be institutions that can bring about change (Woolnough, 2011). In particular, the Catholic Church has been engaged in state, interstate and global politics and development. Therefore, its involvement could bring about change and development.

Through Caritas International and its affiliates, like the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the Catholic Church supports developmental projects in many Third World countries and responds to crises by using its local contacts to distribute food, medicine and other relief services (Brunn, 2001). In South Africa, Lesotho, Sudan and many other countries, the Catholic Church, through its membership status, has a high public profile for its mediation in social issues, especially among the poor and marginalised (Chellakan, 2007; Letsie, 2015; Pillay, 2017). Pillay (2017) states that the South African Council of Churches (SACC), of which the Catholic Church is a member, is expected to play an important role in building the new South Africa. The

implementation of the Catholic Church Encyclicals: solidarity and global justice, would also make a difference. Therefore, it is important to assess the role that the Catholic Church plays in poverty alleviation, especially in small and rural towns like Kopanong Local Municipality. This will contribute to research and assist those interested in small, rural, and peri-urban areas to understand the role of an institution such as the Church in poverty alleviation.

1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This study investigates the role of the Catholic Church in overcoming unemployment and alleviating poverty in Kopanong Local Municipality.

The objective of this study is:

- To understand the role of the church in poverty alleviation internationally.
- To assess the state of poverty in Kopanong Municipality.
- To assess the interventions of the Catholic Church in Kopanong Municipality in the Free State.
- To identify the experiences of people regarding the role of the Church in poverty alleviation.
- To recommend measures that the Catholic Church could implement to alleviate poverty in Kopanong Municipality.

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of poverty has been a topic of discussion in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the focus of Sustainable Development Goals, since it has brought challenges for humanity (Cetin, 2016). At first poverty was considered in economic terms. The definition of poverty has, however, been broadened from being a lack of sufficient income to a deprivation of several life domains (Burchi *et al.*, 2019). The perspectives and approaches to poverty alleviation have thus developed over time (Sofo & Wicks, 2017).

1.4.1 World poverty and poverty alleviation

Poverty has been a global problem that threatens the livelihoods of vulnerable and marginalised sections of the society, especially those who are living in rural areas (Cetin, 2016). Poverty alleviation has thus been a priority concern for the international community, national states and the church (Sapena *et al.*, 2018). According to Barbier and Burgess (2017), since the introduction of SDGs there has been a considerable progress made in alleviating poverty as the “no poverty goal” went from around 73% completion in 2000 to 89% in 2015. However, even though several approaches have been used to alleviate poverty, no blueprint has been found either for poverty alleviation or the definition of poverty, due to its multifaceted nature and a range of factors that cause poverty (Sofo & Wicks, 2017).

1.4.1.1 Definition of poverty

According to Cetin (2016:42), not only did industrialisation, globalisation, and capitalism transform the world, transformation also brought about changes in social, political and economic spheres and challenges for humanity. One of the challenges brought on by the world's transformation is poverty, which has become a global problem, especially among vulnerable and disadvantaged communities or states. Although poverty is not a new concept, Cetin (2016:42) states that there has not been consensus regarding a definition of poverty because “many factors come together and make poverty a complex and also a multidimensional social phenomenon which has no single and an exact definition... poverty is a multi-facet problem needing urgent solutions for whole nations.”

There are several definitions or conceptualisations of poverty. Lister (2004:5) defines poverty as “lack of income and access to good quality health, education, housing and the quality of the local environment.” On the other hand, Sane (2001) defines poverty as a complex, multidimensional phenomenon or state of being that undermines human rights of freedom, expression and association. Moreover, Sofo and Wicks (2017) define poverty as a complex, multifaceted problem with diverse interdependencies.

According to Cetin (2016), the failure to define poverty makes it difficult to develop programmes or strategies for alleviating, mitigating, or resolving poverty. However,

Sachs (2012) states that to address poverty, the international community implemented MDGs to promote global awareness and political accountability as an effective way of mobilising the world to achieve important social priorities. While the MDGs were effective and, to some extent, were achieved in some parts of the world, the international community became aware of challenges brought about by climate change. The multifaceted nature of poverty thus called for a more sustainable outlook, resulting in the adoption of SDGs by the international community.

1.4.1.2 Poverty in Kopanong Local Municipality

Since the dawn of democracy in 1994, South Africa has responded to rural challenges of poverty by promoting the principle that investments should go into areas with demonstrated economic potential, with the hope that growth will trickle down to rural areas (National Spatial Development Perspective, 2006 – The Presidency). Unfortunately, because Kopanong had no such economic potential, the approach only perpetrated extreme poverty levels (National Spatial Development Perspective, 2006). Thus Hurlbut (2010) states that amidst the progress made by the government to alleviate poverty since the end of apartheid, there are still high levels of poverty, inequality, and unemployment.

Kena Consult (2015) states that there are a number of factors which have brought about economic challenges for the Xhariep district and Kopanong Municipality. These include, the absence of critical socio-economic infrastructure and services; the lack of rural development funds which could stimulate rural enterprises and encourage diversification and expansion of opportunities; limited tax base; low literacy and skills levels; poor access to local markets and financial services, caused by weak rural-urban linkages and failure to exploit economic development corridors and zones; and weak co-ordination of planning and implementation of rural development across all the spheres of government.

In 2011, the President of South Africa mandated the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) to champion Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) in twenty-seven impoverished districts in South Africa (Mashiri & Chakwizira, 2016). Mashiri *et al.* (2016) state that Kopanong (Xhariep) district was

among the districts identified as poor and needing special attention through an RDP, as small towns that form the Kopanong local municipality mainly rely on migratory labour and remittances for their survival. As a result, there are high levels of out-migration in Kopanong coupled with the loss of skills. Stats SA (2018) states that due to the absence of clear-cut investment opportunities, 11,5% of people born in the province migrate to Gauteng and other centres of economic concentration where there are more opportunities for education and employment, thus making Kopanong a lagging region.

Another element that makes Kopanong poor is loss or lack of skills. Stats SA (2018) states that, compared with other municipalities, Kopanong has the highest proportions of persons aged 20 years and older with no formal education and the lowest proportions of persons with tertiary education (23,4% and 4,2%, respectively). Stats SA (2018) states that the Free State is mainly dependent on agriculture (17% = 946 638 of households are involved in agriculture) and mining (Mining is the province's major employer, producing about 30% of South Africa's output and making it the fifth-largest producer of gold in the world). Stats SA (2018) further states, however, that the current capital-intensive agricultural system requires less labour, which is the cause of out-migration. Amidst all this, there is an implementation of RDP in Kopanong, an instrument that helps address development challenges in Kopanong. Thus, Kena Consult (2015) has proposed partnership approaches involving all stakeholders, including the private sector, the communities, and all spheres of government to assist in poverty alleviation.

1.4.1.3 *Alleviation of poverty*

The SDGs aimed to move the world to a sustainable trajectory that would address economic development, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion (Sachs, 2012). Besides MDGs and SDGs, other strategies like charity, aid, resource allocation for development projects, and the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) have been used by governments to alleviate poverty. However, these strategies have obviously not been effective enough as poverty persists (Sofu & Wicks, 2017). According to Sofu and Wicks (2017), previous approaches to poverty alleviation, that is, economic and social perspectives hamper both human interests and skills development. Sofu and

Wicks (2017) have therefore proposed an occupational perspective as an inclusive approach to poverty alleviation that will foster a deeper understanding of poverty and how poverty impacts communities and generates new understandings of addressing poverty.

According to Burchi, Malerba and Rippin (2019), the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has broadened the perspective to define and analyse poverty. The United Nations now goes beyond just lack of income to deprivation of several life domains suffered by men and women in different spheres of society in rural and urban contexts. Burchi *et al.* (2019), therefore, use a new indicator of multidimensional poverty called *the Global Correlation Sensitive Poverty Index*, which includes three dimensions: education, employment and health.

Burchi *et al.* (2019) say that even though poverty alleviation programmes were successful in some parts of the world, poverty persists in sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, despite the world's current emphasis on urbanisation, Sub-Saharan Africa needs new labour market policies that focus on improving the quantity and quality of rural households and women's employment. There is, therefore, a need for renewed methods in tackling the different forms of poverty, especially multidimensional poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Thacker (2015) states that poverty is caused by fundamental structures of injustice yet to alleviate poverty. People have spent too much time focusing on the individual and communal plight of the poor, an approach that fails to address broader social issues that perpetuate the cause of their distress. One of the findings has been that most people affected or impacted the most by poverty are those residing in rural areas of developing countries (Sofo & Wicks, 2017). Therefore, the best way of addressing poverty would be to employ the occupational justice framework, a participatory approach that focuses on capabilities, empowerment, and involvement of the most affected people.

1.4.2 Sustainable framework and role of the church

According to Rakodi (2012) there has been a debate about the distinction between the role that faith-based organisations (FBOs) and non-governmental organisations

(NGOs) play in connection to sustainable development. The argument is whether charity leads to development. Rakodi (2012) states that FBOs depend on donations, while NGOs rely on domestic and international institutional funding with the focus on long-term development, yet what is needed for sustainable poverty alleviation is community mobilisation and empowerment.

1.4.2.1 Religion and poverty alleviation

Schweiger (2019) points to a long and eventful history and the interrelatedness between religion through faith-based organisations (FBOs) and poverty, and how helping the poor and the marginalised has been a form of lived faith and part of the tradition of many religious institutions. Tomalin (2018), on the other hand, states that before and during the colonial era until the mid-20th century, when secularisation took over, faith-based organisations played a vital role in social welfare and poverty alleviation. Amidst the dominance of secularisation in the modern era, religious traditions have played a vital role globally at the grassroots level. Faith-based organisations have always supported those experiencing poverty, through service delivery and spiritual resource mechanisms to enhance resilience in individuals and communities, thus making faith-based organisations important determinants in poverty alleviation initiatives (Tomalin, 2018).

According to Lunn (2009:939), during the period of modernisation, religion (faith-based organisations) did not play an important role as it was regarded “as an impediment to economic advancement, irrelevant for modern societies and something that would fade away in time.” However, Lunn (2009) points out that, in the past decades, development agencies have realised that for development to be sustainable or achievable, it needs to incorporate cultural values and beliefs, which only faith-based organisations can easily implement as they engage daily with people at the grassroots.

Bilateral agencies have engaged religious representatives to find out how religion can contribute to “contemporary global development challenges such as poverty, inequality and resource distribution [which] are enduring issues which have faced humanity throughout history” (Lunn, 2009:944).

Lunn (2009) states that faith-based organisations have contributed to humanitarian assistance and social welfare, conflict resolution, reconciliation, politics, and social movements. Furthermore, according to the United Nations Population Fund (2008) (UNFPA), FBOs account for 50% of health service provision in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 55% in Uganda, and around 40% in Lesotho and Kenya. Engagement of FBOs in development has led to increased funding of FBOs in the United States from 2001, whereby the Welfare Reform Act and the Faith Based and Community Initiatives Act agreed that FBOs should be funded, thus increasing funding provided for FBOs from 10.5% to 19.9% (Cooper, 2019).

Cooper (2019) further points out that, due to the complexity of alleviating poverty and development in general, which has focused on sustainable economic growth, the international community has adopted a more holistic approach to development, allowing FBOs to play a part. Although FBOs have used welfare and charity as a means of helping the poor (Sofu & Wicks, 2017), both of which are not developmental, Schweiger (2019) is of the idea that the involvement of the Church or religion as a driver for potential change and empowerment could be of great importance. Still, the question is whether poverty alleviation forms part of the mission of the Church.

The reason for engaging FBOs is that FBOs offer alternative conceptions of sustainable development, such as people-centred development vision, the human rights-based approach, and advocacy in terms of what it means to live a good life, as opposed to a narrow focus on economic growth. The same idea is supported by Tomalin (2018) who maintains that from the year 2000, secular global development institutions, development donors, NGOs, and key global poverty alleviation initiatives like the UN (MDGs and SDGs) have shown great interest in working with faith actors in alleviating poverty.

1.4.2.2 *The mission of the Church*

Part of the Church's missionary activity, as it appears in scriptures, has been its involvement in socio-economic issues. (Luke 10:31 and Galatians 6:10 state that members of the Church should be 'Good Samaritans', that is, they should show love towards the needy, while Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7 points to the disputes concerning

food that was given to widows, which led to the choice of seven deacons – *Diakonia*. The Church's involvement in social issues also sets fundamental guidelines for the Catholic Church's social doctrine to attain social justice and freedom (Dorr, 2005; Obrien & Shannon, 2005).

Though it appears in several encyclicals of the Catholic Church, the mission or role of the Church is explicitly spelt out in the 2005 Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love). Pope Benedict XVI points to the three-fold nature and responsibilities of the Church, which are inseparable: proclaiming the word of God (kerygma-martyria), celebrating the sacraments (*leitourgia*), and exercising the ministry of charity (*Diakonia*). This study will only focus on the latter. Pope Benedict XVI (2005) states that the ministry of charity in the Church should not be a welfare activity but rather, be part of the nature and character, and an indispensable expression of the Church's being. Wagner (2006) also states that charitable works within the Church are a matter of charity and justice, whereby all community members are entitled to receive their share of the world's goods.

Sharing the world's goods and closing the gap between the rich and the poor has been the call of the Church from the time of the Industrial Revolution, as stated by Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (the Rights and Duties of Capital and Labour) (1891), Pope Francis in his encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel) (2013), the Pastoral Letter of the South African Council of Bishops Conference (SACBC) (2000), and the South African Council Churches (Pillay, 2017) as a means of alleviating poverty. All the above documents are concerned with the gap between the rich and the poor, created by the nineteenth-century Industrial Revolution. Pope Benedict XVI, therefore, in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth) (2009), talks about the nature of justice, the limits of the state, and the purpose and character of charitable organisations. He proposes that there should be a new humanistic synthesis of aligning the economy with its social purpose.

Pope Benedict XVI (2009) also views charity and truth as love for one's neighbour and the driving force behind every authentic development of every person and of all humanity, because to love someone should lead to the desire for that person's good and taking effective steps to secure his/her good. Moreover, in his encyclical, *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), Pope Francis (2013) indicates that the Church's

mission is transformation amidst the crisis of collective commitment. Pope Francis (2013) praises the advancements made in health care, education and communications; however, not every member of the society has benefited from those advancements, especially the poor. Therefore, Pope Francis (2013) proposes that, guided by the gospel of mercy and love for humankind, Christians must do all they can to liberate the poor by eliminating all the structures that lead to poverty, while promoting human development, that is, expressing solidarity with the populations concerned as well as building networks of solidarity with a view of joint action for the pursuit of the common good.

According to Lunn (2010) and Swart (2010), both the UN and the South African government have acknowledged the Church as one of the sectors interested in social well-being. Therefore, it must be involved in socio-economic development as it ministers to communities which, in most cases, are underdeveloped, deprived, and poor.

1.4.2.3 *Sustainable and human-centred development*

Two important concepts: sustainable or sustainability and development, are used together to mean maximisation of goals across environmental, economic and social systems (Barbier & Burgess, 2017). For the Church to be an effective agent of transformation within the society, as an essential part of its mission and poverty alleviation (Pillay, 2017), it has to understand what sustainability and development mean. Awuah-Nyamekye's (2012) view is that there can be no single definition for the concept of development as it can be defined differently by people or communities living at a particular time and place, which might not be the case for other people or communities. However, Aryetey (2002:201) states that "development has been viewed as a state of modernisation and the sustained increase in the real per capita income, resulting in a social and structural increase in a country over a long period. These changes include the qualitative and quantitative improvement or transformation of a country's methods of production, roads, and hospitals, level of income, attitude and quality of life."

According to Reginald (2016), sustainable development concerns the environment, ecology and ecosystems. The concept, sustainable development has shifted scope throughout the years. From the 1960s and 1970s, the linkages were between environment, development and human well-being. From the 80s to the 90s, as the scope, perspective and understanding became holistic, the term covered environmental issues and cultural and economic issues. Thus, since the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED 1987), sustainable development was defined as: “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Barbie & Burgees, 2017:2).

On the other hand, Sachs (2012) states that even though sustainable development definitions vary, they all embrace the so-called triple bottom line approach to human well-being. According to De Beer and Swanepoel (2013) there have been debates and a shift from the commonly held truth about community development from the 1980s which led to what is called “new orthodoxy” which emphasises: bottom-up approach to development whose aim is empowerment; and focus on local people or the marginalised whose indigenous knowledge or skills are neither recognized nor celebrated in development discourse. On the same vein, Rakodi (2012) points out that there have been studies conducted between Christian and professional development organisations influenced by wider development experience and thinking concerning sustainable development, since FBOs are concerned about charity (giving) and the professional organisations are concerned about welfare. However, Emas (2015:2) states that “the overall goal of sustainable development is the long-term stability of the economy and environment; this is only achievable through the integration and acknowledgement of economic, environmental, and social concerns throughout the decision-making process.”

Tomalin (2018) argues that, even though the Church has always played a part in supporting those experiencing poverty, it was only in the 2000s that there was a turn to religion by global development institutions and academic development studies. Stine (2020) points to how, over a century, principles of Catholic Social Teaching have included issues related to society, economics, and the environment.

Although the engagement of the Catholic Church in development dates back to Pope Leo's (1891) encyclical: *Rerum Novarum* (On the Condition of Labour), the research will only point to recent encyclicals: *Deus Caritas Est* – God is Love (2005), *Caritas in Veritate* – Charity in Truth (2009) by Pope Benedict XVI, *Evangelii Gaudium* – The Joy of the Gospel (2013) and *Laudato Si* – On care for our Common home (2013) by Pope Francis. Pope Francis (2015), in his encyclical, *Laodato Si* (on care for our common home), is aware of the ills and effects of climate change. He is also aware that economic growth has not led to integral development. An improvement in the quality of life requires an integration of other aspects of human life and not just mere focus on economic and technological growth as employed by scientists and economists. Pope Francis (2015) proposes that rich nations can reduce the ill effects of climate change. Still, everyone should take the initiative to protect our common home by working together for the integral development of society (Reginald, 2016).

Moreover, while world leaders are encouraged by scientists, economists and environmentalists to implement policies that promote sustainable development, Pope Francis (2015) warns against the impacts that those policies might have on the people and the environment and suggests that there should be intergenerational solidarity in achieving sustainable development and that all policies aimed at sustainable development should take into consideration the good of the local community and the future generations. Pope Francis (2015) also warns that there should be limits to growth, production, and consumption as they can be destructive. Developing countries should help pay for pollution reduction and assist poorer countries in supporting policies and programmes of sustainable development. There have, however, been debates on inclusive, sustainable development regarding human/people-centred development, empowerment and ownership of projects aimed at changing people's lives.

1.4.3 Human and people-centred development

According to the 2016 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, human development is about having the freedom to realise the full potential in pursuing what every person chooses and values. It considers each person's capabilities and functioning in pursuit of human well-being and not merely concerned with the pursuit

of material things or economic growth, since both are not the end. Thus, the report states, *“Human Development is the development of the people through building human capabilities, by the people through active participation in the processes that shape their lives and for the people by improving their lives. It is broader than other approaches, such as the human resource approach, the basic needs approach and the human welfare approach”* (UNDP, 2016:2).

The world leaders, representing 193 member states in 2015, came up with Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, which includes seventeen Sustainable Development Goals to ensure that human development is for everyone (UNDP, 2016). UNDP (2016) states that all governments should implement inclusive national policies. These policies should uphold human rights to ensure that no one is left out, and that everybody participates and holds ownership of the processes that influence and shape their lives (UNDP, 2016).

1.5 PARTICIPATION

Participation means that people should influence the processes that shape their lives. According to de Beer and Swanepoel (2013), participation has to do with actions that the communities, related to the development, take to improve or change their existing situation. Furthermore, the UNDP (2016) report states that people need to deliberate and publicly participate in debates as agents in shaping their own lives and environments. Through the free press, debates and discussions, vibrant civil societies and communities can shape their priorities and have political freedom to demand policies that expand their opportunities and hold the government responsible if those priorities are not met. Therefore, people need to be agents and architects of their own lives.

1.5.1 Empowerment

According to UNDP (2016) institutions involved in the process of empowerment should eliminate deprivations and all sorts of barriers to universal well-being, and enable communities to have access to high-quality services, labour markets, quality education and health care. These efforts should ensure that there are equal wages between men

and women and that communities are empowered, as they will participate in economic, political, and cultural spheres. Another possibility would be to encourage and support the community's entrepreneurship and ownership of land, and to empower young people, especially girls. If more girls finish primary and secondary education and pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, they could live to their full potential. Therefore, government policies and institutions should deliver well-being to all marginalised and vulnerable people to ensure that no one is left out (UNDP, 2016).

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research was employed in this study. Babbie (2011) states that a qualitative research design uses data that does not mainly rely on statistical inference, but collects data from the affected people through interaction and observation. As stated by Henning (2004:5), qualitative research is a "type of inquiry in which the qualities, the characteristics of the properties of a phenomenon are examined for better understanding and explanation". More details regarding the research methodology, that is, sampling strategy, methods of collecting (interviews and focus group discussions) and analysing data (thematic analysis) and study ethics, will be discussed in Chapter 3.

1.7 CHAPTER LAYOUT

Chapter 1: Background to the study. It covers the background to the study and purpose of the study, the statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, as well as the scope and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review focuses on poverty alleviation, reduction and different strategies that need to be addressed. The role of the church is pivotal in this research and is addressed in this chapter.

Chapter 3: Research methodology: This chapter presents the research methodology used to address the research objectives. The methodological steps explored include

the research methodology, the research design, the population, the sample size, and further addresses data collection and data analysis.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis. In this chapter, the researcher presents the findings of the research and also the analysis of the results. Different themes are identified.

Chapter 5: This chapter provides a summary and a discussion on how the objectives were addressed in the study. It also includes recommendations based on the last objective of the study. The chapter concludes the research and proposes areas for further research.

CHAPTER 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Eradication of poverty has been the primary concern of the international community for some time, but more especially during the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Burchi, Malerba, and Rippin, 2019). Like many other countries that are aware of high levels of unemployment and poverty, the South African government has embarked on reducing poverty in all its forms through different strategies (Swart, 2010). While on the one hand South Africa is experiencing high levels of unemployment and poverty, especially in rural areas, on the other hand, the church has long been acknowledged by the United Nations, the World Bank and many other development agencies to be the largest, best-organised, uniquely equipped civil institution caring for the poor and the marginalised (Hurlbut, 2018, Triegaardt, 2006, Van Wyk, 2017, Wineburg, 2016).

The purpose of this chapter is to understand the concept of poverty and explore ways in which it can be reduced. To this end, the chapter aims firstly to define poverty, to identify types of poverty, to examine poverty in South Africa, its causes and the challenges involved in reducing poverty. Secondly, this chapter explores how the international community has tried to alleviate poverty, and the strategies South Africa has used to address poverty, generally and within local municipalities. Lastly, this chapter aims to explore the role of the church and how the church could be involved in alleviating or reducing poverty in South Africa, since the church has been influential and has played an active role in the social, economic and political life of South Africa throughout its history.

2.2 POVERTY DEFINITION

Poverty has, over the years, been defined differently by different scholars and agencies. Sane (2001) defines poverty as a complex, multidimensional phenomenon or state of being that undermines human rights of freedom, expression and

association. Poverty also denies an individual's or community's access to basic services like health care, education, work and adequate income. Thus, poverty robs individuals or communities of the freedom to express themselves or to be involved in a community's cultural life. On the other hand, Sofo and Wicks (2017) define poverty as a complex multifaceted problem with diverse interdependencies.

In light of the effects and impacts of poverty on human life, Brown, Harris, and Russel (2010) define it as one of the wicked problems of the world, which involves diverse socio-environmental issues that impact a population's health "and that, so far, have defied resolution" (Brown *et al.*, 2010:4). However, poverty has also been viewed from economic, basic needs, empowerment, and sociological perspectives as it affects not only those who are said to be poor, but the wider society as well (UNESCO, 2016).

Opoku, Manu and Gedzi (2019) and Kretzschmar (2014) state that poverty affects the entire human body as it is both psychological, moral and social. Therefore, poverty cannot be limited to lack of money. As a result, poverty refers to inferiority and insufficiency, or rather a lack of sufficient income especially when individuals, households or communities are unable to command, access, or satisfy a socially acceptable standard of living. Kretzschmar (2014) further states that, from a holistic point of view, poverty has to do with lack of opportunities, exclusion and discrimination of certain groups of people to have access to, and contribute to the economy of their country.

Leading to the introduction of Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, the perspective through which the United Nations analysed poverty has been broadened. In recent years, poverty has been defined as a deprivation of several life domains (Burchi, Malerba & Rippin, 2019). When one considers all these definitions, one could conclude that there can be no single or exact definition of poverty, except that it is a violation of basic human rights and dignity (Cetin, 2016).

2.2.1 Types of poverty

Opoku *et al.* (2019) identify two different types of poverty: absolute or extreme poverty, and relative or moderate poverty. "Absolute poverty refers to the lack of basic necessities such as food, clean water, proper housing, sufficient clothing or medicines

for survival. Relative poverty, on the other hand, is when individuals' way of life and income is worse than the general standard of living in the country in which they live; individuals struggle to live to a normal life expectancy and participate in ordinary economic, social and cultural activities" (Opoku *et al.*, 2019:70).

2.3 POVERTY IN SOUTH AFRICA

According to Swart (2010), about 48.5% of the South African population lived in conditions of extreme poverty from the mid-1990s due to unequal distribution of income and resources. In the same vein, Molobi (2016) states that in 2015 about 56% of black South Africans (of which 60% were women) lived in poverty. The same idea is supported by the 2019 assessment of Stats SA, which indicated that the South African unemployment rate stood at 27.7% of which 37.2% comprised young people. In view of unstable economic conditions in South Africa, Gumede (2014) and Kretzschmar (2014) expect poverty to increase even further in the coming years, unless there is a different approach or change in the status quo.

Looking back to the advent of democracy in 1994, one of the overriding concerns of the government has been to reduce poverty by developing policies and programmes which could transform lives and opportunities of the poorest South Africans for the better (Hurlbut, 2018). Hurlbut (2018) further states that despite the government's interventions and commitment to reduce poverty, South Africa continued to be faced by the triple challenge: high levels of poverty, inequality, and unemployment that the government aims to overcome by 2030.

2.3.1 Causes of poverty in South Africa

Woolard and Klasen (2004) point to four major causes of poverty traps in South Africa which reduce individuals or communities to generate income and which makes them economically vulnerable. These causes are namely: demography, employment status, low educational attainment, and ownership of assets. It is these traps which are the legacy of apartheid characterised by race, gender, age, and geographic location that perpetrate people's exclusion from the economic mainstream.

On the other hand, Seekings (2014), and Bhorat, and Van der Westhuizen (2010) point to unemployment and inequality as perpetrators of poverty and a legacy of apartheid system that brought about segregation and racial discrimination as major causes of poverty in South Africa. To date, that is, after twenty-six years of democracy, the issue of land has not yet been resolved as there are still many people who do not have access to land, thus they are excluded from the country's wealth, a phenomenon that denies them the freedom of association and involvement in community's cultural life (Sofu & Wicks, 2017).

2.4 POVERTY REDUCTION AROUND THE WORLD

Sapena, Almenar, Apetrei, Escriva and Gil (2018) state that even though poverty reduction has been a priority concern for the international community, there are no consensus or guidelines as to how poverty should be measured. Opoku *et al.* (2019) on the other hand state that there is no consensus as to what poverty reduction should mean. Nevertheless, poverty reduction is one of the major issues or goals for the United Nations and it is the first goal of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Alleviation of poverty has also been the World Bank's concern for many years as the World Bank estimated in 2008 that about 1.29 billion people in the world were living in absolute poverty (Opoku *et al.*, 2019:71).

According to Opoku *et al.* (2019), promotion of economic growth has been used over the years as a shorthand method to permanently lift people over the poverty line. On the other hand, Sofu and Wicks (2017) point to how perspectives and approaches to poverty reduction have evolved over the years. Firstly, in order to reduce poverty, world governments allocated resources to low- and middle-income countries to subsidise developmental projects. Secondly, in the second half of the 20th century a more holistic approach emerged, which paid more attention to ecological and developmental issues that emphasised justice, peace and integrity.

Furthermore, at the Copenhagen Declaration, in 1995, the international community committed itself to halve the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015 (UN, 1996). In 2000, United Nations countries agreed upon Eight Millennium Development Goals whose aim was to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger (UN, 2000). Even

though progress was made against poverty, climate change and other environmental issues became another challenge alongside the poverty-reduction objectives (Sachs, 2012). Thus, the International Fund for Agricultural Development observed that there were still approximately 1.4 billion people who continued to live in extreme poverty, especially those residing in rural areas of developing countries (IFAD, 2010).

In June 2012, at the Rio summit, the UN Secretary-General (Ban Ki-Moon) proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which were to be adopted at the UN General Assembly in September, 2013. The aim of SDGs was to move the world to a sustainable trajectory which would combine economic development, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion as a hallmark of sustainable development (Sachs, 2012).

Moreover, while subsidy and aid were seen as methods of reducing poverty, both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) observed that aid was not effective, therefore, Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) was introduced by donor agencies with a requirement that countries which received donations should take ownership of their own development policies and strategies (Sofu & Wicks, 2017).

2.4.1 Poverty alleviation strategies and challenges in South Africa

According to Swart (2010), poverty in South Africa dates back to the apartheid era. Since the 1994 democratic rule, poverty has been addressed through macro-economic policies like the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), Growth, Empowerment and Redistribution (GEAR), Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA), National Spatial Development Framework (NSDP), social insurance programmes, social grants, and pension funds. All these policies and strategies were driven by poverty eradication whose aim was to promote economic growth for the benefit of the poor, but due to ineffective governance, lack of accountability, poor implementation, and poor monitoring and evaluation within the government, most strategies have not been effective (Sofu & Wicks, 2017).

However, Hurlbut (2018) observes that inequality, unemployment and poverty have remained a pervasive feature of the South African socio-economic landscape due to unequal distribution of resources, poor implementation of programmes and a slow

economic growth. As a result, about two and half million people slipped into poverty due to economic inactivity as a result of apartheid policies and low levels of education among blacks. Thus Townsend (2012) suggested that the capabilities approach from the occupational perspective of justice could be explored.

There are two more approaches from the occupational perspective and occupation-focused approach proposed by Sofo and Wicks (2017) who maintain that, if implemented effectively, could bring about a positive change. These include the Participatory Occupational Justice Framework (POJF) and the Self Evaluation for Effective Decision making – Stimulating Community Awareness, Learning and Energy (SEED-SCALE), both of which have been deemed effective in Nepal, Afghanistan, and East India, but which have not been adopted in South Africa.

According to Whiteford, Townsend, Bryanton, Wicks, and Pereira (2017), the former approach, namely POJF, has direct relevance in facilitating justice and addressing complex issues associated with poverty, as it is based on occupation, enablement and justice. The latter approach, according to Tayler *et al.* (2012) answers the questions: “What can we do with what we have, here, [and] today” (Taylor *et al.*, 2012:3), which according to Sofo and Wicks (2017) is a theoretical approach in nature, as it addresses people’s values, the economic factor, and the environmental conditions (socio-economic-info-biosphere), which are multiple interactions from where solutions can emerge.

In the same vein, Whiteford *et al.* (2017) agrees that the concepts: occupation, enablement and justice can be used effectively to guide poverty eradication programmes, as they focus on transforming social structures and power relations, which are key determinants of occupational participation in daily life. However, according to UNDP (2014) as much as transforming social structures and power relations are important there should be a clear vision and direction as to how economic growth should be a means of alleviating poverty. Thus Triegaardt (2006) points out that the approaches to poverty eradication that South Africa has implemented have failed as a consequence of unemployment because they were not transformative.

UNDP (2014), being aware of the limitations of economic growth as a strategy for poverty eradication, proposed inclusive and sustainable human development as a strategy that could be an important ingredient for reducing poverty in all its dimensions.

This approach, if managed properly, could prove to be ideal during this time of globalization. It is through inclusive growth that jobs can be created, which in turn can result in the improvement of equality and the quality of life. In the same vein, Sapena, *et al.* (2018) state that capabilities, opportunities, and social inclusion are some of the alternatives which could be used by antipoverty policymakers. Since the Church is one of the most influential non-profit organisations with assets and networks worldwide, its role in the improvement of basic conditions and the quality of life of people living in poverty cannot be ignored (Wineburg, 2016).

The Constitution of South Africa (1996:1331), in its efforts to eradicate poverty, mandates municipalities to provide democratic and accountable governance, to provide services to communities, to promote social and economic development, and to promote a safe and healthy environment, whilst encouraging communities to become involved in local government matters. Swart (2010) points out another approach to poverty alleviation which was introduced in the White Paper for Social Welfare. That approach stipulated participation, empowerment, equity, accountability, accessibility and partnership as key elements for government developmental. The White Paper for Social Welfare thus introduced the developmental approach in the delivery of social welfare services, emphasising the multi-dimensional and integrated nature of service delivery and the achievement of social economic justice, which includes building on the strengths of the poor and needy communities suffering from poverty and inequality.

South Africa has implemented a wide range of initiatives, such as the social wage and improved access to basic services, education, health care, social protection and economic opportunities, in pursuit of its central goal of poverty and inequality reduction since 1994. Despite all these initiatives, however, it has experienced low economic prospects that undermine its progress, resulting in high inequality, high unemployment, and high levels of poverty still persisting in rural areas (Hurlbut, 2018).

2.4.2 Poverty alleviation strategies and challenges within the local municipality

Puukka, Dubarle, Mickiernan, Reddy and Wade (2012:48), define a local municipality as:

“...a typical medium sized urban agglomeration, exercises most local government attributes in service delivery such as primary and secondary schooling, health and social services, basic infrastructure, on the basis of funding allocated from the national level by reference to formulas such as head counts, sources and levels of household revenues, which are under control of the provincial level. If the province considers that a local municipality does not have adequate human resources to exercise its powers in a given sphere of competence, such responsibility can be exercised directly by the province.”

Hendricks (2018) states that while it is the responsibility of local governments to provide local basic services, it is also the responsibility of the local government to set up local economic development strategies that will create jobs and raise their citizens' income. There is, however, ongoing debate regarding the responsibilities of the local government, that is, whether it has to provide basic services and maintain or improve local infrastructure for business and livelihoods so as to create an enabling environment for Local Economic Development (LED).

On the one hand, Koma (2012) states that it is the responsibility of the local government to play a critical role in promoting social and economic development in line with the constitutional imperatives. Thus, the local sphere of government is viewed as playing a crucial role in the realisation of growth and development objectives underpinning national and provincial frameworks. On the same vein, Hendricks (2018) states that, to achieve its economic development strategies, the local government must identify people living in poverty and target resources and services to help them escape it. It goes without say that a clear understanding and definition of poverty is required before one can tackle the issue of poverty or try to eradicate it.

Furthermore, Hurlbut (2018) points out that child support grants and school feeding programmes aimed at helping poor families were used by several government departments as a means of reducing poverty. For example, the Department of Agriculture implemented garden or community food projects, while the Department of Public Works has introduced the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) for food security and income generation projects. These programmes are meant to help unemployed youth with work experience and training. Although the above programmes are national and provincial initiatives, it is only through co-operation and

constructive support from national, provincial, and local governments that these developmental initiatives can be achieved (Bekink, 2006).

Moreover, the South African government mandated the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) to develop plans aimed at addressing the needs of people who live in extreme poverty and underdevelopment in rural areas. The DRDLR developed the Rural Development Plan Programme, which was initiated in 2011 and aimed to assist in the identification of developmental opportunities in rural areas. Xhariep District, under which Kopanong Local Municipality falls, was identified as one of the districts which needed special attention and which could benefit from the development of an RDP, so that it could achieve its full developmental potential (Mashiri, Njenga, Friedrich & Chakwizira, 2016).

Mashiri *et al.* (2016) identify four classifications of spatial economic regions. Xhariep District, however, falls under lagging regions, that is, "...regions that are losing population and experiencing industrial restructuring, or rural regions that are experiencing emigration" (Mashiri *et al.*, 2016:509). Amidst the National Development Plan (NDP) of eliminating poverty and reducing inequality by 2030, the National Spatial Framework (NSF), and Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs), aimed at addressing service delivery in poor provinces, Kopanong Local Municipality falls under rural places that are not growing economically. This is because of lack of investment in economic and social infrastructure, inadequate skills, poor innovation capacity and weak governance all of which are key in "reducing the economic distance and enhancing goods, labour and capital market opportunities" (Mashiri *et al.*, 2016:509).

2.5 THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

According to Nieman (in Swart, 2010), there are twenty-three religious groupings in South Africa, with a membership of about 84% of the population, many of which are poor, underdeveloped and lacking resources. Thus, Nieman states,

"Considering the concern that religion has with personal and social well-being and the meaning of life, it would seem a natural consequence that there should be a strong interest and involvement in the study and practice of social development in the face of underdevelopment, deprivation and poverty" (Swart, 2010:37).

If one considers that the church, more than any other group of non-profit organisations, has always played a central role in welfare services and in supporting those experiencing poverty (Tomalin, 2018), it goes without say that the poverty situation in South Africa calls for the Church to become more involved in social development and in the transformation or empowerment of society (Van Wyk, 2016).

From a biblical point of view, the general role of the church, both in the Old (Genesis 45:7-8, NGV) and the New Testament, is reflected in God's concern for the poor and the condemnation of injustice. In the New Testament, Christian social responsibility, that is, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, healing the sick, and welcoming strangers became an essential part of the ministry of Jesus and His disciples (Matthew 25:45-46, Luke 10:25-27, Acts of the Apostles 4:32-35, and James 2:26, NGV). According to Atiemo (2017:251), besides the church's missionary mandate, in the contemporary development discourse, the Church has played an important role as the provider of resources for the human dignity and promotion of justice in most African countries and elsewhere in the Global South.

Berger (2003) states that, over the past two decades, when Article 71 of the United Nations Charter introduced the term non-profit organisations, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) became active players both in policy and decision-making in the international sphere, as promoters of human rights, sustainable development, care of the environment, peace building, and good governance. Since this recognition by the United Nations, churches and NGOs became even more involved in development and the provision of extensive relief and social services in regions where there was lack of governmental will or capacity. Churches have since become a major force in shaping the discourse of development at United Nations conferences.

Churches, however, through charitable organisations, have in advanced industrialised economies, continued to work alongside the government to provide not only welfare assistance to people living in poverty, but also development opportunities (Ambrey, Parsell, Spallek & Robinson, 2019). Swart (2010) acknowledges that, for churches to be relevant role players in South Africa, poor people should be empowered when they become part of social development initiatives that enable them to recognise and utilise their own capabilities. Therefore, churches should adopt a non-prescriptive, all-

inclusive style of intervention as a prerequisite rather than their traditional welfare and material aid programmes, which have somehow had a negative effect on decisions regarding education, work, marriage and childcare.

2.6 THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN POVERTY ALLIEVATION

According to Lunn (2009:939) amidst the active role that the church played in relief services, charity and development over the years all these roles have either been under-represented or avoided by “development theory and academia, development policy and institutions, and development practice and NGOs” as the church was considered a private institution that was irrelevant and had nothing to do with the development discourse in modern society. It is only in the past few decades that the international community has started showing interest in engaging with the church in developmental issues (Swart, 2010; Tomalin, 2012).

There are different views as to whether the church or religion in general has or can have anything to do with poverty eradication. Research, however, shows that the church (Christianity) has, since its inception, always been involved in social transformation by adhering to its missional responsibility (Pillay, 2017). The role of the church could be viewed firstly, as ethical and secondly, as its divine mandate (Dei & Dowuona, 2016), even though there have been times when Evangelicalism concentrated more on spiritual matters than on material conditions like poverty (Chester, 1993).

According to Ali and Hatta (2014), helping the poor and the marginalised in many religions is a form of lived faith. Helping the poor is part of the character and the five pillars of the Islamic way of life practiced by Muslims. Although this comes in the form of charity, it is compulsory, and is founded on and inspired by their religious beliefs. For Muslims, therefore, it is a duty for all members who have received their belongings from God to help the poor members of their community.

In Christian churches, as in Muslim churches, supporting the poor is also a prerequisite. This element is widespread among churches and monasteries and can be traced back to the faith's origins (Holman, 2009). Moreover, throughout the world, there are churches, faith-based organisations, and members of consecrated life who

are influential in providing disaster relief and welfare services where there is limited state capacity. These groups get engaged in the provision of social and health services aimed at poverty eradication and assistance to those in need (Furness & Gilligan, 2012; Gocmen, 2013; Thornton *et al.*, 2012; Tomalin, 2012). Thus, Schweiger (2019) states that, to eradicate poverty, there must be effective partnership between governments and religious groups, especially in social development, disaster services, and economic development in order to bring about social change and sustainable delivery of social services for the benefit of those living in poverty.

Schweiger (2019) explains the extent to which the church could contribute to poverty eradication on four levels. Firstly, this can be addressed at the micro level where the church can formulate norms and practices that have the potential to alleviate poverty in the everyday lives of those living in poverty. Secondly, this can be addressed at the motivational level by encouraging people to try to break out of poverty rather than submitting to it. Thirdly, at the local level, this could be addressed through local soup kitchens run by churches with little infrastructure. At the fourth level, which is the global level, there are confederations of relief and social services such as *Caritas*, which are well-connected global players with highly professional structures and many resources, and which have become important partners for other NGOs and government institutions.

Although poverty is a worldwide phenomenon, as stated by Oladipo (2000), and churches are among a wide range of respected institutions, their role as influential, important, and potential role players in poverty eradication is a subject of vibrant debate, either within the churches themselves or among their sponsors. The question here is about boundaries, that is, to what extent should churches be actively involved, and how can this be justified within theology or theological discourse? (Clarke, 2011; Noble, 2014; Rajkumar, 2016; Togarasei, 2011).

Besides playing an active role in poverty reduction (Tomalin, 2018), the church has at times been criticised for contributing to the creation of conditions of poverty and that its aim has not been to help eradicate poverty, but to gain converts. The point of interest of this research is, however, on the positive role that the church has or can play in poverty alleviation. According to Bolotta, Scheer and Feener (2019), in the closing decades of the twentieth century, because of the expanded need for

humanitarianism, there was a radical transformation whereby a number of development actors turned their attention to “religious organizations in their search of new means for providing basic social services and the advancement of particular agendas of development through non-state actor interventions” (Bolotta *et al.*, 2019:244).

2.6.1 Turn to religion

Swart (2010) and Tomalin (2018) call this radical transformation or the expansion of international humanitarianism a “turn to religion.” But the turn to religion is not a new thing and can be traced back to the colonial era, as indicated by Lunn (2009) and Wineburg (2016). Beger (1967) takes the idea even further than the colonial era by stating that, it was during the rise of modernisation and secularisation in the global north, and after the Second World War, that the church lost its values and the authority it had upon individuals and the state, as sociological descriptive and normative theories of secularisation started to function.

However, Tomalin (2018) states that it was during this turn to religion that both the global development institutions and academic development studies showed a marked interest in religious values and faith actors as important determinants in the drive to reduce poverty. Since 2000, secular global development institutions (the World Bank, the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), development donors, NGOs, and key global poverty reduction initiatives, have asked faith actors to couch their developmental work in terms of their shared global goals and also to discuss what their sub-goals would consist of (Bolotta *et al.*, 2019, Dodds *et al.*, 2017, Tomalin *et al.*, 2017). Given the awareness of religious values and of the extensiveness and effectiveness of existing welfare and social development networks run by the religious sector in South Africa, there have been claims that there is a need for a formal religious-state partnership in the field of social development (Swart, 2010).

2.6.2 How the church has shaped the development discourse

Lunn (2009) and Tomalin (2018) note that religious traditions are the ones that shaped the understanding of development and the provision of welfare support in pre-colonial settings. Lunn (2009:940) says, “Some scholars have also observed the irony that the development discourse, while secular, displays many of the characteristics of a religion”. On the other hand, Tomalin (2018:2) says, “[church] and poverty reduction were intimately entwined, with the contemporary global development project being a legacy of this, and therefore having religious roots that are now obscured”.

In the same vein, Mitchell (2017) observes that over the years, development was seen as a project of modernity, which stands above and apart from the church or religion in general. Thus, “International development studies, as an academic discipline, grew out of post-Enlightenment thinking that saw science and technology as offering a new plausibility structure for humankind. From its earliest days, development was about finding the right kind of interventions to achieve an enduring uplift in living conditions. While some theorists embraced community-led models, such as those focusing on greater civic participation, there was discomfort about the acceptance of religion as having any central role in development work” (Mitchell, 2017:284-285).

Lunn (2009) and Mitchell (2017) state that, because of patchy gains delivered through development, academic attention has had a renewed appreciation for development programmes which are community-focused. This realisation came from the view that to achieve sustainable development, cultural values and beliefs should be incorporated. International development initiatives (UN, World Bank, and IMF) have thus begun to engage the church in development work, especially in developing countries, so as to understand how the church can contribute to development. Firstly, this is because for centuries, churches have been active worldwide in politics, health care, education and humanitarian aid. Secondly, Lunn (2009) states that in Africa, particularly in Uganda, almost half of primary health care services are provided by the church, and that churches have made significant contributions in development in the absence of other actors. Therefore, religious organisations and communities form part of the wider structures through which much-needed development resources could be channelled, as they operate at every level of the society, including rural areas, which makes for effective distribution systems. Mitchell (2019) argues that it was impossible

to meaningfully engage with communities when that which is most important to them, the church or religion, is left out of the conversation. The view that churches should play a role in social development has thus led to the establishment of the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) in 1998, and the South African National Religious Association for Social Development (NRASD) in 1997, both of which are to act as networks between the South African government and religious communities about social development programmes (Swart, 2010).

There is also support from scholars that the church can play an active role in poverty eradication. Sullivan (2011); Yurdakul and Atik (2016); Puffer *et al.* (2012); Dillen and Van Hoof (2016); and Rogers and Koneiczny (2018) note, for example, that religions can play an important role in the lives of the poor to help them understand themselves and interpret their social and economic position, their immediate society and the world around them. The potential impact of the church is therefore clearly of importance and interest as the church can both relieve and stand against poverty, whilst simultaneously legitimising resistance.

Furthermore, Beyers (2014) states that all religions have something to say about poverty and other issues related to social inequality, and that they offer implicit and explicit interpretative templates. In South Africa especially, where poverty is perpetuated by unemployment, injustice, inequality, lack of basic services and corruption, the involvement of the church seems to be of paramount importance (Mandela, 2005; Markl, 2011). Thus Schweiger (2019) states that what is important is that the church has been “a driver for potential change and empowerment” (Schweiger, 2019:2), which is what South Africa needs at this stage.

2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the global understanding of poverty and its impact on individuals and communities, and has proposed effective strategies which could be implemented in South Africa to eradicate poverty. In recent years, both the United Nations, the World Bank, development agencies, and the South African government have shown interest in the church not only as an influential welfare service provider, but also as a representative of a potentially powerful voice and resource (Swart, 2010;

Wineburg, 2016). About 84% of South Africans are members of the church (Swart, 2010), which makes the church one of the institutions closest to the people, even at grassroots level. Since the church understands people's language and respects their sentiments and culture, it constitutes an institution that is most trusted and supported by the needy and poorest populations. The involvement of the church in poverty eradication might thus bear better results, as it has been effective in providing care, education, health, and social support long before the advancement of the present development agendas.

CHAPTER 3 : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the methods employed by the study to address the problem statement of investigating the role of the Catholic Church in poverty alleviation in Kopanong Local Municipality. The reason Kopanong Local Municipality was chosen as case study was influenced by the continuing plight of poverty in Kopanong amidst government attempts to alleviate poverty in rural areas.

The discussions in this chapter will be based on the research methods employed in this study, namely, sampling design, data collection strategies, data analysis, research ethics, and limitations.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study was carried out as a case study design because it is associated with a location or a single municipality – Kopanong Local Municipality. According to Bryman (2012) the basis of case study involves a detailed and extensive analysis of a single case that concerns a complexity and particular nature of the case in question. Yin (2011), however, states that a case study can be employed if the researcher's intention represents a unique case that deserves to be studied in its own right, as long as the case warrants study, even though it might only cover a particular situation or context.

For this study, Kopanong is the object of interest in its own right, and the researcher aims to provide an in-depth elucidation, exploration and description of the role that the Catholic Church can play in Kopanong, so that programmes for poverty alleviation can be recommended.

3.2.1 Research Method

Qualitative research was employed in this study. Babbie (2011) states that a qualitative research design uses data that does not mainly rely on statistical inference,

but collects data from the affected people through interaction and observation. As stated by Henning (2004:5), qualitative research is a “type of inquiry in which the qualities, the characteristics of the properties of a phenomenon are examined for better understanding and explanation.” The qualitative research approach is therefore appropriate for this study as it will increase the chances of yielding adequate data from participants’ experiences in their social setting.

3.2.2 Target population

Walliman (2011) regards population as either, objects, events, organisations or people within which there will be only a certain group that will be of interest to the researcher’s study. This study targets the Department of Justice and Peace in the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference (SACBC), the ministers of the Catholic Church in Kopanong Local Municipality and the members of the parish pastoral council (some of whom might be direct or indirect beneficiaries of the church’s programmes) because they are relevant in answering the research aim, since they are directly involved in the day-to-day social and developmental issues within the Catholic Church.

3.2.3 Sampling design

Willaman (2011) defines sampling as a process of selecting just a small group of cases out of a large group, but which will represent the entire population. In the same vein, Bryman (2012) states that there are a number of diverse principles involved in sampling, but that sampling is usually based on principles to do with the search for a sample that can represent a wider population.

This study has employed a purposive sampling design. Creswell (2014) and Bryman (2012) define purposive sampling as a method of selecting documents or participants who will best help the researcher to understand the research problem and the research questions. Furthermore, Yin (2011) describes purposive sampling as a deliberate manner in which samples are chosen, with the aim of having a specific study unit that will yield the most relevant and plentiful data in order to obtain the broadest range of information and perspectives on the subject to be studied. Thus, participants who can generate rich information on the phenomenon under discussion are purposively

selected to represent a group to enhance the outcomes' transferability and feasibility (Maree, 2016). For the purpose of this study participants who were capable of yielding the most relevant and broadest range of information and data were purposively sampled.

Three groups were sampled in this study: the SACBC representatives or co-ordinators, namely, the bishop in charge of the commission of advocacy (Department of Social Development - Justice and Peace), the national co-ordinator and the diocesan (Bloemfontein province) co-ordinator; parish priests in the Kopanong area; and the members of the parish pastoral councils in Bethulie, Phillipolis and Jagersfontein. All the groups were purposefully sampled as they are the ones directly involved in the day-to-day social issues of the Catholic Church, both at national and municipal levels. However, there was no pastoral council in Phillipolis, but the contrasting findings in Bethulie and Jagersfontein were able to reach saturation because in Bethulie there are well established programmes for poverty alleviation while in Jagersfontein a lot still needs to be done in order to have sustainable programmes.

3.2.4 Sampling size

Bryman (2012:197) states that decisions about sample size are a compromise between the constraints of time and cost, the need for precision, and a variety of further considerations. Forty-one (41) people were sampled in this study. Firstly, the national representative of the SACBC, the national co-ordinator, and the Free State province co-ordinator ($1+1+1=3$). Secondly, two priests working in Kopanong Local Municipality ($1+1=2$). Thirdly, twelve people representing the Bethulie, Phillipolis and Jagersfontein parish pastoral council ($12+12+12=36$). The reason for sampling forty-one is that they will represent the Catholic Church both at the national, provincial and municipal levels.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

According to Yin (2011) the collection of data in empirical research serves as the foundation for the research study. On the other hand, Bryman (2012:12) states that data collection represents the key point of any research project whereby

“...the researcher establishes in advance the broad contours of what he or she needs to find out and designs research instruments to implement what needs to be known.”

Bryman (2021) further states that structured, unstructured, or semi-structured interviews are examples of instruments which could be used in collecting data. In this study, data have been collected using two methods of interviews: face-to-face or telephone interviews (for members of the SACBC and parish priests); and focus group discussion for parish pastoral councils. The data collection instrument is attached in Appendix A.

3.3.1 One-on-one (Telephone) Interviews

Face-to-face interviews involve a conversation between the researcher and the participant, and are aimed at obtaining the participant's own experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Face-to-face interviews using a semi-structured interview framework guide were used in this study with two SACBC co-ordinators, namely, the bishop in charge of the Department of Justice and Peace, the national co-ordinator, the Free State co-ordinator and the priests/ministers in Kopanong Local Municipality.

According to Yin (2011), qualitative interviews do not adopt any uniform behaviour as they follow a conversational mode that will present the opportunity for a two-way interaction, whereby the participants are able to use their own understanding regarding how they make meaning of their own experiences or perspectives.

3.3.2 Focus group discussions

Three focus group discussions were intended to be used to collect data from parish pastoral councils in Bethulie, Phillipolis and Jagersfontein. The parish pastoral council consists of five to ten people in total. In Bethulie and Jagersfontein participants who were sampled, that is, the parish pastoral council honoured the invitation. However, there was no parish pastoral council in Phillipolis. Moser and Korstjens (2018) describe focus group discussions as a method of data collection with a small group of people to discuss a given topic, usually guided by a moderator using a questioning route.

Moreover, Bryman (2012:501) states that focus group interviews are a technique or method of interviewing a group of people with the focus of exploring a topic in depth when the researcher is interested in ways in which individuals discuss a certain issue as members of a group, rather than simply as individuals.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Dey (2005), qualitative analysis is a logical sequence of steps or logical relationship between phases in the analytic process taken from the first encounter with the data through to the problems of producing an account. The steps of analysing data follow the process of categorising or linking data after the data has been read and annotated in order to produce an account. Thus Flick (2014) states that data analysis is the central step in qualitative research that forms the outcomes of the research.

Dey (2005) states that qualitative data analysis is an iterative process or a series of spirals of looping back and forth through various phases within the broader progress of the analysis. Bryman (2012) puts it differently by stating that the researcher searches for recurrences of sequences of coded text within and across cases for links between the codes in order to make sense of the data by linking it with research questions and the literature so that it can be interpreted. Moreover, Flick (2014) states that the main aim of data analysis is to reduce big data sets to core elements or expanding small pieces of data by adding extensive interpretations.

Thematic analysis was used in this study, which Bryman (2012) describes as a means of examining data to extract core themes that could be distinguished both between and within transcripts through coding of each transcript. Coding is a process of breaking down the data into labelled components for better management and reduction.

3.5 RESEARCH ETHICS

Although embarking on research can enhance knowledge and benefit recipients, researchers must consider that participants have rights which need to be respected and protected, therefore the researcher should be alerted of ethical issues before any

inadvertent harm is done (Drew, Hardman & Hosp, 2007, Silverman, 2017). Ethical clearance is attached as Appendix B.

In embarking on research, Glicken (2003) states that researchers should be open and honest when engaging with participants to guard against bridging ethical norms entailed in the research process. Glicken (2003) further states that participants should, therefore, be involved in research without coercion (Glicken, 2003).

Bryman (2012) mentions four types of ethical principles which should be considered when conducting research. These include: harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy, and deception, all of which will be covered in this study.

3.5.1 Harm to participants and invasion of privacy

The researcher has ensured that there was neither physical nor emotional harm to participants, by guarding them against anything that could cause physical harm while simultaneously respecting their privacy. Permission was sought to perform research. (Refer to Appendix C).

The researcher will also “advocate care over maintaining the confidentiality of records” (Bryman, 2012:136). The records will be stored in a safe place. Taped records will be kept in a securely-locked drawer at home and all other data will be saved on a secure, password-protected computer, accessed only by the researcher. The data will be kept for five years, which is the prerequisite for storage of research data, after which it will be destroyed.

3.5.2 Lack of informed consent

The researcher informed participants about all the research features so that participants understand the purpose of the study and potential risks involved. Only after participants had been informed about the purpose of the study the participants were able to give their informed consent, afterwards the participants signed the consent form before proceeding with the research processes. According to Bryman (2012:138), “The principle means that prospective participants should be given as

much information as might be needed to make an informed decision about whether or not they wish to participate in a study”.

3.5.3 Deception

The researcher did not disguise his identity. Participants were informed about the purpose or intent of the research so that they could respond naturally (Bryman, 2012). Neuman (2006) states that the identity and role of the researcher must not be misleading as it can easily break the trust between the researcher and participants, and that the researcher must follow ethical routes or rules to build trust with participants.

3.6 LIMITATIONS

The overall aim of research is to add knowledge to existing knowledge. Nonetheless, a set of limitations might affect the scope of the work, resulting in inapplicable conclusions in certain circumstances or certain relevant issues in the study not being addressed, making the study unreliable (Hofstee, 2006). Much thought has to go into the method of data collection and the sampling strategies to test if the quality of the analysis will be sufficient (Silverman, 2017) or else the study or findings might not be sound. In this study, several limitations are anticipated.

This study is about the role that the Catholic Church can play in Kopanong Local Municipality, located in a rural area. The findings might not be applicable either to other rural or urban areas of the Free State province or to the entire country. This study will use purposeful sampling, which means that only a few participants will be sampled. The richness of the information obtained from many participants is therefore limited and cannot adequately represent or articulate the national perspective (Bryman, 2012) convincingly.

Furthermore, non-compliance of the participants can also be a limitation. Participants could not turn up for an interview for some reason or not be available as it happened in Phillipolis where there was no parish pastoral council, an element that limited the researchers' capabilities. It was also difficult to conduct research with full-time workers

because some of them had limited time. However, the researcher endeavoured to arrange a convenient time for participants to be interviewed, even though that was time-consuming and prolonged the duration of the research. In instances where participants could not answer their phones for an interview, the researcher had to find other means of getting the work done. Because of the unavailability of the bishop in charge of Justice and Peace department the appropriate replacement was the coordinator of Catholic Social Action, a newly established department in the SACBC which will be an associate of Caritas Internationalis.

CHAPTER 4 : FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter two, the literature review presented poverty alleviation strategies by providing an overview of poverty and poverty alleviation strategies internationally and in South Africa. As indicated by Mashiri *et al.* (2016) and the Kopanong Local Municipality 4th Generation of Integrated Development Plan 2017/2022 (2017), Kopanong local municipality is one of the rural areas facing the problem of poverty. As stated in chapter three, the aim of this study is to explore the role that the Catholic Church could play in overcoming unemployment in Kopanong Local Municipality, thereby alleviating poverty. The purpose of this chapter (chapter four) is to discuss and finalise the findings.

4.2 FINDINGS

The findings are based on the Focus Group Discussions with the parish pastoral councils of Bethulie and Jagersfontein, the parish priests of the above-mentioned parishes, and interview responses from representatives of the SACBC Department of Social Action which incorporates Justice and Peace. Seven questions were prepared for all three parish pastoral councils, while there were four questions for the representatives of the SACBC and the parish priests. Both focus group discussion and interview questions were developed as a means of collecting data and there was allowance for further comments from the participants in order to gather as much information as possible. Even though the intention was to get people who might have benefited directly from the programmes, it was impossible to reach them, therefore, only few people who might have given a good picture of the successes of the programmes were available.

4.2.1 The layout of the findings

The thematic approach will be used to present the findings. Three themes were developed, which were related to the questions and responses from the parish pastoral councils, the parish priests and the representatives of the SACBC. However, responses from the focus group discussions and those of the parish priests and representatives will be discussed in specified themes. Furthermore, the responses from the focus groups will be explained as per parish, namely, St. Peter and Paul (Bethulie) and Kriste Morena (Jagersfontein) so as to assess and compare what is happening in those areas.

- Programmes or strategies for poverty alleviation	1- Which programmes or strategies does the Catholic Church have for poverty alleviation?
- Successes and challenges of the programmes	1- Have these programmes or strategies been successful in alleviating poverty? 2- Which challenges has the church experienced in terms of alleviating poverty? 3- Did beneficiaries take part in the implementation of the programmes?
- Improvement and ensuring poverty alleviation	1- What could be improved to ensure that these programmes or strategies help to alleviate poverty?

4.2.1.1 Theme 1: Programmes or strategies for poverty alleviation

4.2.1.1.1 SACBC's representative Response

According to the SACBC representatives, most of the SACBC poverty alleviation programmes are under the umbrella of Caritas South Africa (CSA), which is an official non-profit development agency of the SACBC, mandated to operate in South Africa and the whole of the Southern continent to carry out social activities of the Catholic

Church through the SACBC department for Catholic Social Action. CSA is, however, in its early stages of implementation as part of Caritas Internationalis, which is an international NGO carrying out all social activities of the Catholic Church.

According to the CSA representative, throughout different dioceses there are different programmes, such as organisations distributing food parcels. Currently, there are other social action agencies which are distributing food parcels, however, CSA is not well informed as to what is being done, or as to how many food parcels are being distributed, and how many families or households are being assisted. In future, Caritas aims to establish an organised database that can help them know their reach. Caritas also has management standards, which means that all the dioceses will be oriented by Caritas Internationalis regarding how the dioceses will run their offices so that there is sustainability and continuity, as many organisations are short-lived. There will therefore be a Caritas office based in South Africa under this structure.

Moreover, the CSA representative stated that, once implemented, the vision and mission of CSA will be based on the guiding principles and the conviction to be with the poor based on the gospel values and Catholic Social Teaching. This approach focuses on the dignity of the human person; to be in solidarity with the poor by witnessing to justice and peace; by having a strong commitment in promoting integration, social cohesion and mutual respect; and to take care of creation and the environment. Once implemented, CSA programmes will focus on key areas in the long-term development philosophy of providing a beacon of hope for women, men, and children in times of hardship regardless of their creed, race, gender or ethnicity.

As part of the programmes to be implemented, Caritas (CSA) will co-ordinate humanitarian and socio-developmental programmes in the fields of emergency relief; disaster preparedness and management; social and integral development of people, environment and creation; advocacy; peace building and skills training programmes. At the moment Caritas is training co-ordinators, who then have an obligation to train other co-ordinators in each diocese or place. Caritas believes that all people, especially the marginalised poor, can be agents of much-needed change in South Africa. The poor, rather than being mere objects of pity, can thus lead the struggle to eradicate dehumanizing poverty, and to change unjust social, political, economic and cultural structures that lead to unacceptable living conditions.

For Caritas, the dignity of the human person is the foundation of moral values, therefore, Caritas rejects any abuse or discrimination of the poor and the vulnerable, by making God's love for creation manifest in the world through the empowerment of people to live with dignity. Therefore, Caritas encourages that all social, political, and cultural structures within all spheres of the governments be transformed into holistic social structures that favour the poor members of the society.

Prior to the implementation of CSA, the Catholic Church in South Africa had many ways of responding to the cries of the poor, but now the bishops are creating Caritas structures in the Southern continent of Africa, which will serve as a co-ordinated body, not for employment purposes, but to carry out the mission of the church. CSA is therefore entrusted with the task of co-ordination and implementation of various Caritas development activities, which were carried out by other development agencies or departments in response to the cries of the poor in all twenty-six dioceses of South Africa. This means that each diocese will have its own Caritas.

According to one of the SACBC representatives, social action activities in all the dioceses were carried out by different stakeholders and member agencies for social action, such as: Rural Development Support Programme (RDSP), Rural Education Access Programme (REAP), AIDS Office, Justice and Peace Commission, Siyabhabha Trust, and the Society of St Vincent De Paul. These agencies or departments are at the service of respectful dioceses of the SACBC to discern the signs of the times and the promotion of the prophetic stance of the Church under the leadership of the Council for Evangelisation. However, the co-ordinator of Justice and Peace in the Free State indicated that some of the programmes run by these departments have not yet reached people at the grassroots, that is, the parishes, especially those in rural areas.

- Rural Development Support Programme

RDSP is an associate body of the SACBC and has been building the capacity of rural communities in South Africa since 1992, with its head office in Cape Town. It also has an associate staff member representing the SACBC in the Eastern Cape. Unfortunately, RDSP programmes have not yet been implemented in the Free State province. However, where implemented, the RDSP programmes have, over the past 22 years, been working in close collaboration with community-based organisations

and small groups, and they have delivered a range of support services designed to contribute to the building up of rural infrastructure, skills training, organisational development, mentorship, and exposure in rural areas. Rural development is of utmost importance for rural communities as they need to be assisted in finding sustainable solutions to their pressing needs.

- Rural Education Access Programme

REAP is an organisation that provides an effective and accountable education access programme. REAP strives to alleviate poverty through facilitating access to tertiary education. According to the compiled report regarding REAP, it is when rural youth are empowered that they can make a positive contribution in the community and to civil society in South Africa. REAP empowers graduates with skills which will contribute towards alleviating poverty and help bring about economic and social well-being for all South Africans. REAP's vision is to endeavour to facilitate access to higher education and to develop and empower skilled graduates. It is through working with these students that the SACBC will have an impact on the demographic inequality in South Africa and will endeavour to give the disadvantaged, isolated and marginalised rural youth the opportunity to overcome inherent academic and social hurdles in order to realise their potential.

REAP works in partnership with the National Student Financial Aid Scheme. REAP students have access to a subsidised loan for tuition fees, a small grant for books and living expenses and a support programme enabling successful completion of their studies. In all institutions of higher learning, REAP provides students with an advisor who facilitates problem solving, and who motivates and monitors their performance. Currently REAP has some 400 students doing a range of degrees and diplomas in most South African universities.

- SACBC AIDS Office

The SACBC AIDS Office has, over the past ten years initiated, among its programmes, a house-building project for poor and vulnerable families in rural areas, especially for orphaned children and the families of vulnerable children. The beneficiaries of the houses often come from very over-crowded circumstances and confined spaces, a situation in which privacy is totally limited, with no conducive space for children to

pursue their studies. The houses are provided for families with special and specific cases, after research has been conducted by the office that works in partnership with representatives from the particular Catholic diocese and local community, to identify benefitting beneficiaries. The housing project is mostly targeted towards helping poor people in rural areas; those who have been left behind to eke out a living while bread winners move elsewhere in search of employment opportunities. The simple, standardised two-roomed habitats are a great improvement compared to previous collapsing structures, which were constructed from iron sheets or plastics.

- Justice and Peace Commission

The department of Justice and Peace was established in 1967 in response to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and Pope John XXIII's resolution that the Catholic Church needed to be more involved in the world. The department effectively became the SACBC's anti-apartheid mobilisation and campaigning arm throughout the apartheid era.

The department of Justice and Peace functions as the official social, economic, and environmental justice advocacy and peace building agency of the SACBC. It incorporates dedicated programmes across a wide range of key thematic areas, such as gender, economic justice, environmental justice, participatory democracy, race relations, land reform, social renewal, international solidarity, trade justice, peace-building, and training for organisational and skills development of the justice and peace network throughout the SACBC region.

Justice and Peace aims to realise its vision by building communities at the local and diocesan levels, comprising of women, men and youths who are motivated to promote and work for justice, peace and social transformation at the local, diocesan, national and international levels. It also aims to realise its vision by harnessing the vast expertise that exists within and without the church in all sectors of society, so as to deepen the understanding and analysis at all levels of the Church concerning issues that require the church's response and advocacy and that lead to effective action for a more just and peaceful society.

- Siyabhabha Trust

The Siyabhabha Trust operates in South Africa, Botswana and Eswatini. It is governed by a Board of Trustees and each of the 29 dioceses of the SACBC. The members of the Siyabhabha Trust's General Committee meet at least once every year to discuss development matters that affect their immediate communities and the country in general. The work of the Siyabhabha Trust is guided by the Catholic Church's Preferential Option for the Poor and the principle of integral human development, which provides constant and central guidance to all Siyabhabha programmes.

Siyabhabha programmes recognise that every person's needs should be met holistically and they aim to empower the poor, the voiceless, and the socially excluded so that they can become active participants in their communities. Siyabhabha is therefore committed to providing poor people from every faith, origin and background, with the means to realise their full potential so that they can contribute to the common good. The role of the Siyabhabha Trust is oriented around providing strategic support for processes such as: Participatory rural appraisal, partnership brokering, supporting relationship building between the dioceses and the programme service providers, monitoring and coaching of staff on the ground, research, monitoring and evaluation.

- Society of St Vincent De Paul

The Society of St Vincent De Paul (SSVP) in South Africa has approximately 2051 registered members and many more volunteers spread across 243 active conferences and 15 central councils, and they work relentlessly to assist people in need and to combat social injustice. During the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, the SSVP was the first to respond and to reach out to the different parishes and dioceses all over the country (South Africa) in order to assist the poor and vulnerable. They provided soup kitchens and feeding schemes, and distributed food parcels, toiletry packs, clothing, blankets, toys and presents for Christmas.

While the SACBC is well structured and has poverty alleviation programmes designed for their respective dioceses, the co-ordinator of the Bloemfontein diocese pointed out that in the Free State province, their programmes are still dependent on contributions from the Knights of Da Gama and St Vincent De Paul, which are charity programmes that provide food parcels and clothing to the poor, and that the poor depend mostly on

the initiatives of parish priests or parishes who organise food parcels, set up soup kitchens or donate clothes for deprived members of their parishes whenever there is a need.

4.2.1.1.2 Parish Priest Response

According to the parish priest of St Peter and Paul (Bethulie), the Bethulie Church has the social arm of CARITAS Office, which is managing most of the social activities of the church. The church runs about four poverty alleviation programmes: the orphans and vulnerable children programme (also called Philani); the home based care for HIV and TB programme; the migrants, refugees and stateless programme; and the children for children programme.

- Orphans and Vulnerable Children Programme – Philani

This programme is for children who do not have parents and either stay with a guardian or in child-headed homes where children live alone with no one to look after them. This programme provides food to the children on a daily basis. From time to time the children are taken away for a weekend to a church farm named Mount Carmel, where they are fed healthy food and given the chance to de-stress through outdoor activities. The food they get from the project is for some the only meal for the day. There are full time volunteers to look after these children and monitor their school attendance. They are also encouraged to have small gardens at home, but due to lack of rain it becomes a challenge to grow anything.

- Home Based Care – HIV/ TB Programme

This programme is for old people who can hardly do anything for themselves. They are visited by our volunteers in the mornings to make sure they are clean and have been given their medication before having something to eat. Most of these people earn old age grants, but because these grants are not substantial enough to sustain them for a full month, the office usually assists by providing them with porridge and nutritional supplements so that they are able to take their medication.

- Migrants, Refugees and Stateless Programme

This programme is for all people who are not South African citizens and who do not get any help from the government. They either left their countries due to extreme poverty or due to war. The church demonstrates some form of humanity toward them by occasionally providing them with food and clothing. The church also assists them to get their legal documents in order, although this is a long, strenuous process that demands a lot of perseverance and funding. These people are very gifted with their hands and try to find means to survive using their creative skills, which they then share with our projects in the communities. It is also the church's mission to integrate migrants, refugees, and stateless people into the communities

According to the parish priest,

“The Church strongly believes that not all ‘foreigners’ are bad, there are good ones too with good intentions. In as much as not all South Africans are good, there are bad ones too”.

- Children for Children

This programme focuses on needy children in the Diocese. After school they get food from our aftercare projects. They are also provided with school uniforms as a motivation to attend school regularly. Sometimes they get food parcels to cook at home and eat with their families.

4.2.1.2 Theme 2: Implementation, success and challenges of the programme

4.2.1.2.1 SACBC's representative Response

According to one of the SACBC representatives, as indicated above, several programmes have been implemented by the SACBC to alleviate poverty, but as soon as Caritas structures are in place, all poverty alleviation programmes will fall under social action departments co-ordinated by CSA. Besides what the Catholic Church has done in the past, the SACBC representative pointed mainly to how the Catholic Church, through its social action departments, has responded to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The representative of the SACBC stated that SACBC is facing the challenge of living at a time when poverty is increasing and the resources coming in are decreasing. Before we had many different fundraising mechanisms, but now we are living in confusing times. Many people are no longer contributing as much as before, but we cannot explain exactly what the problem is. The representative of the SACBC further stated that modernity and the evolution of internet have caused many young generations to lose the very values and principles which were there before. Many of the people who are contributing, even in Europe, are older people because they believe that contributing is a way how to help the poor and the Church. Many of the young generations are not able to contribute for many reasons, including:

- Joblessness (no sources to support the programmes).
- Localisation (one of the possibilities is that resources should come from our own communities. South Africa has lots of potential and resources, but so far there seems to be no clear strategies aimed at alleviating poverty among rural communities. South Africa has a lot of richness, human and material resources but the resources are not well distributed).
- Corruption (on the part of government and civil society, preventing us from capturing these resources and putting them directly into the hands of the poor. That is why poverty is increasing, because there is a mistake. A lot of co-ordination is needed to empower more people).
- Lack of co-ordination.

Another SACBC representative stated that Caritas compiled a book to explain or give a visibility study of how the Catholic Church has responded to the pandemic (this type of situation) and many people were happy to see themselves included in the responses. The book has all the details of all the social action departments, including the successes and challenges of the respective departments and how they responded to the Covid-19 pandemic. The following are summaries from different social actions departments:

- **Rural Development Support Programme**

Since 1992, RDSP has had over twenty training courses, forty mentoring fieldtrips, and two exposure programmes. Every year there are over 1000 people who benefit from these sessions. Since 1992 more than 15000 people have been trained and

RDSP has worked with more than 500 community-based organisations, many of which are in remote rural areas.

According to the RDSP report which CSA compiled during the Covid-19 pandemic, RDSP has been operating, but in a very different way than usual. Once the lockdown was enforced, the core work of onsite training and mentoring could not continue. However, the staff and the management board decided to continue to support vulnerable rural communities. The staff reached out to the different community development organisations in which they work in the Western, Northern and Eastern Cape, to assess their needs. Because no specific funding was available, the agency decided to raise funds via social media, specifically a Facebook page and WhatsApp. Almost all the provinces, except the Free State province, have reported on their RDSP achievements during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Notwithstanding the challenges that the RDSP encountered, the fundraising campaign which was launched on 20 April 2020 for the supply of face masks and hand sanitisers to three Eastern Cape villages, was successful as the masks were made by a local woman who provided income to two families.

- Rural Education Access Programme

One of the challenges of REAP at the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis in March 2020 was the closure of institutes of higher learning, resulting in all students having to return home. The indefinite suspension of face-to-face classes and the implementation of online academic programmes made it difficult for students to participate successfully, because online platforms rely on having a laptop, reliable network connectivity, data, access to electricity, and an environment that is conducive to study. A comprehensive survey was conducted by REAP in April 2020, which ascertained that many students were struggling as some live in over-crowded dwellings and were uncertain about their academic futures.

Added to the challenge was the fact that REAP had to cancel all its scheduled workshops and camps and had to find virtual ways of supporting its students. Not only did Covid-19 affect students, it also affected staff and tutors who had to work remotely to assist students to adapt to the transition. With the relaxed Covid-19 restrictions, REAP is trying to assist students to return to their residences, where there are

conducive study environments and Wi-Fi. Unfortunately, though, there are still students who have had to continue studying from home.

According to the CSA report, the challenge that the Society of St Vincent De Paul faced since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic has been the closure of churches, which also affected the Society's fundraising activities. The society has experienced an overwhelming number of new applications, despite its limited resources.

- SACBC AIDS Office

Apart from building houses for poor families, the SACBC is also involved in ongoing support programmes to provide services to poor people, such as supporting poor children in their studies, providing them with food, and helping them to access social grants from the government. The SACBC is also involved in capacity building programmes, aimed at empowering poor people through skills training (such as food gardening, baking, sewing and computer training), which helps them to become independent.

- Society of St Vincent De Paul

As indicated above, during the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, the SSVP were the first to respond and to reach out to the different parishes and dioceses all over the country (South Africa) in order to assist the poor and vulnerable. They provided soup kitchens and feeding schemes, and distributed food parcels, toiletry packs, clothing, blankets, toys and presents for Christmas.

Amidst the challenges that SSVP faced, SSVP managed to distribute +/-250 000 food parcels while also assisting +/-30 000 people through soup kitchens and feeding schemes. Thus, SSVP has been an instrument of hope to the needy as the church, schools and local businesses and associations rallied for much-needed help and resources amidst rising unemployment rates.

According to the SACBC representative, the challenges that the church has faced include a very limited budget, which makes it impossible to accommodate the extensive number of people who need help. Covid-19 was also a big challenge, as SSVP programmes could not run as planned.

The following statement was made by one of the SACBC representatives who stated that the Catholic Church is doing all it can to help the poor:

“The Catholic Church was always there, we’re the biggest service provider in the world; we’re the highest and biggest, even bigger than the UNHC, bigger than the UN with the resources from the Catholic people. That is important to mention. People can go wherever they want. They can challenge whomever they want to challenge, but we’re the biggest and the highest and most transparent organisation.”

- Parish Pastoral Council’s responses

A programme that has been identified as being successful is the vocational and skills development programme. Bethulie participants stated that in the past, their parish was run by missionaries whose friends or relatives would visit them from overseas. Aware of the plight of poverty in Bethulie, the visitors met with the youth to ask them about their challenges and needs. As a result, those visitors teamed up with the parish priest to organise vocational training or skills development opportunities for the youth who were considered to be living in poverty.

According to Bethulie participants, the skills gained at Mount Carmel were said to have opened doors for many young people who ended up graduating from institutions of higher learning after they had been introduced to those skills through the Mount Carmel programmes. The participants agreed that the programmes somehow achieved the goal of alleviating poverty, as the young people who participated in those programmes are now able to feed their families. Several young people who attended the training are either self-employed or are working for certain companies. Those who started their own small businesses have been able to hire other young people in the community, an element which has created employment for the youth.

The Bethulie participants also added that the programmes have not only reduced poverty in their community, but that they have also reduced crime, drug abuse and teenage pregnancy. Many young people who were no longer attending church services came back to church because the activities in church and the programmes kept them busy. However, the challenge is that, not all young people who have been part of the programmes are successful in implementing what they have been taught. The participants also pointed out that there are two vegetable gardens in Bethulie that

the Catholic Church leased to the youth, but because of laziness they have not been utilised.

On the other hand, Jagersfontein's programmes focused mostly on welfare programmes, and the provision of food and clothing. Participants from Jagersfontein admitted that food parcels and clothes do not necessarily alleviate poverty, but at least they put a smile on the recipients' faces.

4.2.1.3 Theme 3: Betterment of the programmes to ensure alleviation of poverty

As indicated above, several programmes have been implemented in the SACBC to alleviate poverty. Despite challenges encountered, some programmes have been successful. However, there is still room for improvement to ensure that the programmes are more effective.

- SACBC representative response

According to the SACBC representative, for the programmes to ensure that there is poverty alleviation what is needed is:

Formation or the process of conversion of the heart (if we are truly clear regarding what we want to achieve as the Catholic Church we will get new people. But if you ask them about the Social Teaching of the Church, they do not know. Maybe there should be continuous catechetics in the Church because people only go to Mass (service) or the homily of the priest, that is only what they access. And there is a lot of confusion, in general, about religion. People have their own impressions. Some people see the Church as some kind of business not as evangelisation for the works of charity).

Accountability and record (in some instances you will find that there are people distributing food, but there should be people looking for housing needs or getting legal information for the people who have the right to apply. There is no distribution of knowledge. This is the crucial moment for us to get this potentiality of service delivery from the Church)

Techniques (to have a sustainable way of ensuring poverty alleviation, the church needs skills that need to be developed)

- Parish Pastoral Council responses

With regard to whether the programmes have been successful in alleviating poverty, the Bethulie parish pastoral council stated that the programmes have been successful because the church has managed to help more than 2000 families consistently. 43 Stateless children managed to get their birth certificates and they now get social grants from the government.

With regard to what should or could be done differently, the Bethulie parish pastoral council stated that the church should get more funding and that more soup kitchens should be opened in order for the church to reach out to more needy people.

Bethulie participants agreed that the programmes were very successful and helpful, but they were not happy with the programme's enrolment process. The participants stated that annually, only a few people get a chance to be part of the training. The participants said that it would be helpful if the number could be increased. Moreover, the participants said that it would be better if the certificates that participants obtained after training could be accredited with institutions of higher learning as that would help speed up the process, especially when the participants registered with institutions of higher learning. Furthermore, the participants said that even though young people come back with skills, it would be better if the programme could help them with business plans to facilitate the registration of their businesses. This would also enable them to get funding from different government departments instead of having to borrow money to start their businesses, as is the case at the moment.

One of the points raised by the Bethulie participants was that a better assessment of the programmes could have been given by the beneficiaries whom they had invited for the discussions. However, the timing of the meetings of the electoral political parties made it impossible for those beneficiaries to be part of the discussions.

The following statements made by the participants highlighted their appreciation of the programmes:

"Our parish is so helpful. Our parish priests fetch young people from all our parishes and also the community to take them to Mount Carmel for vocational trainings like agriculture, plumbing, sewing, welding, and hair-dressing to alleviate poverty among members of the Church and the community in general."

“The programmes have been very helpful because some of the children who have attended them are now able to assist their families. One of the children who attended the programmes is now bank assistant. Some children who were part of the programmes have graduated from university. It is encouraging to see these young people progressing in life, unlike some of us who knock at people’s doors (not offices) while they have certificates to prove that they have qualifications.”

Jagersfontein participants stated that the interviews had a positive impact on their thinking as they realised that there was more that the church, or associations within the church, could do to ensure poverty alleviation. Furthermore, the participants stated that to improve or ensure improvement of the programmes, the association should extend its services to helping children to get identity documents, so that they could ultimately get social grants that would improve their quality of life.

Jagersfontein participants also pointed out that some families are poor because they cannot manage their finances, therefore, poor families should get advice on how to manage their finances. One of the participants who is working in close contact with the Jagersfontein mine stated that one of the ways of ensuring that the programmes achieve their goal could be collaboration, that is, working in close collaboration with other stakeholders within the community, like the Jagersfontein mine, the department of social development, and shops around Jagersfontein, to obtain more support for the programmes.

Another point which was raised is that starting vegetable gardens would be one way of alleviating poverty. It was also stated that illiteracy is one of the major problems that leads to poverty, therefore, if children from poor families could at least be helped to register at the university, that would help them a lot as the majority of young people cannot further their studies because they are unable to get funding for registration with institutions of higher learning.

The following statements were made by the participants in appreciation of their achievements in helping the needy:

“It was encouraging to see how delighted people would be during Christmas to receive both clothes and food parcels, because they would have clothes and food like other families. Putting smiles on people’s faces is encouraging.”

“We like the programmes because many people get to be helped. Many people are shy to ask for help or to say that they are poor, but whenever we are aware of what is happening, we volunteer to help them.”

4.3 ANALYSIS

The responses from the SACBC officials, the parish priests, and the focus groups will now be analysed by using the specified themes as a comprehensive summary of the findings.

4.3.1 Theme 1: Programmes or strategies for poverty alleviation

According to Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love) (2005) charity is a response, activity, and expression of the church's love that seeks the integral good of man. Charity seeks to promote man in the various arenas of life. It is not simply charity but love which is a service that the church carries out in order to attend constantly to man's suffering and his needs, including material needs as there can be no room for a poverty that denies anyone what is needed for a dignified life.

The concern for the poor and alleviation of poverty dates back to the time of the industrial revolution and appears in the encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, the Rights and Duties of Capital and Labour (*Rerum Novarum*) (1891) whereby Pope Leo XIII stated that the world's goods should be shared in order to close the gap between the rich and the poor. The idea of closing the gap between the rich and the poor is also shared by the Pastoral Letter of the SACBC (2000), Pope Benedict XVI encyclical (*Deus Caritas Est* – God is Love, 2009), Pope Francis' encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel) (2013), and also the South African Council of Churches (Pillay, 2017).

From the findings, it is clear that the Catholic Church has always been concerned with the alleviation of poverty for the following reasons:

- a) The Catholic Church through Caritas South Africa and other departments under Caritas, have programmes or strategies aimed at combatting poverty – the programmes restore human dignity, the sense of co-responsibility in building a better world and the promotion of rights of the poor.

- b) The criteria used for helping the needy clearly shows that the programmes are meant for any person who needs help, regardless of race, gender or faith, especially people who live in remote areas. Caritas targets marginalised areas, the unemployed, child-headed families and the vulnerable.
- c) The Catholic Church also contributes to community development through its various activities: RDSP whose aim is to build the capacity of rural communities; REAP that facilitates access to funds for Higher Education, development and empowerment of skilled graduates; and Justice and Peace that transforms the society by raising awareness among people about the causes of suffering and poverty, and working for a more just society where basic human rights of all people are respected, especially those of the poor, of women and anybody who is marginalised. As a result of Caritas' activities, poverty rates are reduced and livelihoods of communities are improved.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Implementation, success and challenges of the programme

According to Lunn (2009), in Africa, and Uganda in particular, almost half of the primary health care and development services are provided by the church in the absence of other actors, especially in rural areas where religious organisations and communities form part of the wider structures through which resources that communities need for development could be channelled. From the findings, over the past twenty-two years of their implementation, RDSP programmes have not only created but have also successfully implemented a range of support services designed for the building up of rural infrastructures to ensure sustainable development for rural communities. However, there have been challenges in the past year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to lack of funds or donations and lack of co-ordination of the programmes.

From the findings, RDSP programmes are designed for rural development. Over the past twenty-two years of its implementation RDSP has not only created but has successfully implemented a range of support services designed for the building up of rural infrastructures to ensure sustainable development for rural communities and working in collaboration with community-based organisations. Despite the challenges encountered during the Covid-19 pandemic that led to lockdown, and even during

lockdown, RDSP has been successful in supporting vulnerable rural communities, even though it had to restructure its programmes so that they remain sustainable.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Betterment of the programmes to ensure poverty alleviation

According to Schweiger (2019), an effective partnership between governments and religious groups in social development and economic development is needed for sustainable delivery of social services. What Schweiger (2019) says is in line with the SACBC representative's view that South Africa has potential and resources. Looking at the challenges encountered by most of the SACBC social action programmes during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the suggestion of the SACBC representative that SACBC social action programmes should be localised, it is evident that given resources, and working in collaboration with different government departments would make the efforts for poverty alleviation more fruitful.

Moreover, Schweiger (2019) and the representative share the sentiment that confederations of relief and social services like Caritas, which have global connections, highly professional structures, and many resources, could play a vital role in contributing to poverty alleviation. Once the Caritas Internationalis structures have been implemented within the SACBC and have spread throughout the dioceses of the SACBC like the Archdiocese of Bloemfontein where Jagersfontein is located, hopefully there will be change and the assurance of better results in the efforts of the SACBC to alleviate poverty.

4.4 CONCLUSION

The findings indicated that the Catholic Church has made efforts in helping the poor through charitable works and skills development. The next chapter will discuss the findings, draw the conclusion, and give recommendations based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 5 :

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter four presented the methodology and the research findings. This chapter aims to draw conclusions on the findings and to provide recommendations. The first section includes the summary of the discussions and literature review. The second section includes the conclusion, while the third section includes recommendations and suggestions for further study.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The literature conducted shows that since the dawn of democracy in 1994, macro-economic policies like the RDP, GEAR, ASGISA, and NSDP were implemented to transform lives, to give opportunities to the poor, and to promote economic growth; however, because of inequality, unemployment and illiteracy, those initiatives have been ineffective (Hurbult, 2018, Sofo & Wicks, 2017, and Woolard & Klasen, 2004). Both the SACBC representatives and the parish pastoral councils agree that several programmes have been implemented by the SACBC social action departments, like the RSDP, REAP, Siyabhabha Trust, and the Society of St Vincent De Paul for the alleviation of poverty. However, despite the attempts of both the government and the Church's initiatives, poverty is still prevalent in South Africa, especially in rural areas.

The representative of the SACBC pointed out that South Africa has potential, but that because of corruption and poor service delivery, the resources are neither properly distributed nor co-ordinated. The representative of the SACBC proposed that it is through co-ordination, accountability, and technique or skills development among the SACBC departments and the government that poverty could be alleviated. Sofo and Wicks (2017) also share the same sentiment and maintain that it is due to ineffective governance, lack of accountability, and poor implementation, monitoring and

evaluation within the government that most poverty alleviation strategies have not been effective.

While both the SACBC representatives and the parish pastoral councils agree that the programmes have been somewhat effective, they pointed out that the challenges faced by the SACBC is the ever-increasing number of poor people. What the SACBC representatives maintain is in accord with what Gumede (2014) and Kretzschmar (2014) have already outlined in the literature regarding the fact that poverty in South Africa is expected to increase further in the coming years, unless there is a different approach in the status quo.

Failure of both the government and the Church to alleviate poverty might be related to the failure to define poverty, of which Cetin (2016) states that it is the failure to define poverty that makes it difficult to develop programmes for alleviating, mitigating or resolving poverty. As the literature has already pointed out, inequality, unemployment, and illiteracy are the root causes of poverty. The department of Justice and Peace within the SACBC, with its mandate of being more involved in the world, needs to engage more with the government on issues of social justice so as to break the barriers of inequality that have for so many years denied black people and women the opportunity of owning land.

Unemployment is mentioned as one of the root causes of poverty. The government has tried to alleviate poverty through social grants, while the SACBC has tried to do so through food parcels and soup kitchens. However, Rural Development Support Programmes and the Justice and Peace commission are in line with Townsend's (2012) capabilities approach that advocate for justice in the attempts to alleviate poverty. In the same vein, Whiteford *et al.* (2017) state that occupation, enablement and justice could be used effectively to guide poverty alleviation programmes, as they focus on transforming social structures and power relations, which are key determinants of occupational participation.

Furthermore, while the literature points to more effective and approved poverty alleviation programmes, like the Participatory Occupational Justice Framework (Whiteford *et al.*, 2017) and the Self Evaluation for Effective Decision making – Stimulating Community Awareness, Learning and Energy (Tayler *et al.*, 2012), most developing countries, including South Africa, still use the top-down approach to

development. Sofo and Wicks (2017) state that it is through the SEED-SCALE approach that solutions to poverty could emerge, since the approach is theoretical in nature and addresses people's values, economic factors, and environmental conditions.

5.2.1 The role of the church in poverty alleviation

According to Lunn (2009) and Tomalin (2018), even before governments engaged in poverty alleviation or understood the development discourse, Churches were already providing welfare support to their members and communities through charitable works. The representative of the SACBC stated, with excitement and passion, that the Catholic Church is the biggest service provider in the whole world, even bigger than the United Nations. Wineburg (2016) also shares the same sentiment by stating that in 2008 Caritas International alone had employed 440,000 paid staff and 650,000 volunteers whose salaries were estimated worth US \$5.5 billion. Caritas also purchased 3000 ambulances, special cars and so on for smaller Catholic organizations. Thus, Wineburg (2016:7) concludes: "It is not necessary to list more. The list is virtually endless, and the extent of Western funding is virtually impossible to discover, because so much is invisible as it is personal." What the SACBC representative said is evident in the social action programmes that the Catholic Church has implemented in many provinces of South Africa. However, helping the poor and the marginalised has been part of lived faith among many religions (Schweiger, 2019).

Mitchell (2017) observes that post-Enlightenment thinking saw science and technology as new ways which could offer plausible structures for humankind, thus the Church was avoided in development discourse. Lunn (2009) shares the same sentiment and maintains that, because of modernisation and its goal of economic growth, religion was regarded as backward and was therefore ignored. However, Schweiger (2019) observes that religion and poverty have always been interrelated and that all religions have something to say about poverty. Despite the absence of literature on the involvement of the Church in poverty alleviation, the representative of the SACBC, the parish priest of Bethulie and the participants of Jagersfontein, through charitable works, skills development, and access to education, have ensured that the

Catholic Church (like many other Churches and religions) has been helping the poor and the marginalised as part of its tradition.

5.2.2 State of poverty in Kopanong Local Municipality

According to Kena Consult (2015), the state of poverty in Kopanong Local Municipality is characterised by the absence of critical socio-economic infrastructure and services, lack of rural development funds which could stimulate rural enterprises and expansion of opportunities, and weak co-ordination of planning and implementation of rural development across all spheres of the government. The SACBC, through the RDSP department, has programmes aimed at alleviating poverty in rural areas. The government could utilize or learn from these programmes to guide the co-ordination and implementation its own programmes, since the RDSP programmes seem to be effective as Bethulie participants stated that some of the young people who have attended the Mount Carmel programmes have benefited from the programmes. Moreover, as stated by Tomalin (2018), the contemporary global development project has religious roots and is the legacy of the Church. It presupposes that there is a lot that Kopanong Local Municipality could learn from the Church and that it could work in collaboration with the Church.

Kena Consult (2015) also points to low literacy and skills as perpetrators of poverty in Kopanong Local Municipality. The SACBC REAP Department, on the other hand, is giving a helping hand to ensure that young people from poor families have access to education, so that they can contribute effectively to the economy of their country. However, from the findings, it appears that nothing has been said about REAP programmes. The implementation of REAP programmes in Kopanong Local Municipality could bring about much-needed change for the Kopanong Local Municipality, especially since Stats SA (2018) maintains that the municipality has the highest percentage of persons aged twenty and older who have no formal education. Consequently, there is high migration of people from Kopanong to other centres of economic concentration for employment reasons.

5.2.3 Interventions of the Catholic Church in Kopanong

According to Bethulie participants, the parish priest of Bethulie, and the representatives of the SACBC there are several programmes in numerous provinces of South Africa which have been implemented to help the poor and to alleviate poverty. While Bethulie participants pointed to agriculture, sewing, hair-dressing, and welding as some of the programmes that the Catholic Church has implemented in their area; the parish priest of Bethulie pointed to orphan and vulnerable children programmes; migrants, refugees and stateless programmes. The parish priest pointed to children for children programme as an example of programmes that the Catholic Church has implemented as intervention in different dioceses. Unfortunately, besides the provision of food parcels and the collection of clothes for the poor in Jagersfontein, nothing much has been done by the Catholic Church in Jagersfontein as a way of intervention.

5.2.4 The experiences of people regarding the role of the Church in poverty alleviation

Bethulie participants are proud of what the Catholic Church has done in their area, not only for Catholics but for the community in general. The Jagersfontein participants, on the other hand, were inspired by the group discussions and the aim of the research and indicated that they were willing to contribute to the development of their community to ensure poverty alleviation, since there is a lot that still needs to be done by the Church in this regard.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

The concept of poverty needs proper understanding on the part of both the Church and the government, that is, what poverty is, its causes and ways or strategies which could be effective and sustainable in alleviate poverty. It is through creation of employment opportunities and closing the gap between the rich and the poor that can create or constitute necessary conditions for development and alleviation of poverty. The SACBC would do even better if it could ensure that all its programmes are more sustainable. What seems to be a failure on both the part of the government and the Church, is the failure to address root causes of poverty, that is, social injustices that

for many years have discriminated against certain people and have prevented them from participating fully in the economic growth of their country.

5.3.1 The role of the Church in poverty alleviation

The Church is playing a role in poverty alleviation especially in Bethulie by empowering the youth or giving them skills which can give them a better life. The initiatives of the church have empowered the youth with skills that have expanded their access to decent work even though in a small scale.

5.3.2 State of poverty in Kopanong Local Municipality

There is still a lot that the Catholic Church could do in Kopanong Local Municipality, given that the inhabitants of the municipality rely mainly on migratory labour and remittances for their survival. Moreover, as indicated by the parish pastoral councils of Bethulie, although the Free State province depends mainly on agriculture (Stat SA, 2018), and agriculture is among the programmes given at Mount Carmel, a lot still needs to be done by the Church to ensure that its beneficiaries are equipped with the current advanced capital-intensive agricultural systems aimed at transforming lives and alleviating poverty.

5.3.3 Interventions of the Catholic Church in Kopanong

In Bethulie, the Catholic Church has intervened extensively to alleviate poverty through charitable works and developmental programmes offered at Mount Carmel, while in Jagersfontein, the Catholic Church has only intervened through charitable works.

5.3.4 The experiences of people regarding the role of the Church in poverty alleviation

Although people who benefited directly from the Bethulie (Mount Carmel) programmes were not part of the focus group discussions, the Bethulie parish pastoral council

participants were passionate about what the programmes had achieved both in the Church and in the community.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings presented in Chapter four, it seems that the Catholic Church has implemented poverty alleviation programmes in several provinces of South Africa, barring the Free State province. The following are the recommendations for ensuring poverty alleviation in Kopanong local municipality:

5.4.1 The understanding of poverty and poverty alleviation

Amidst attempts of the international community to alleviate poverty, poverty remains a burden for rural communities in developing countries, including South Africa. Several factors like social, political, economic and cultural factors, make poverty a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that cannot be alleviated by means of charitable works alone. A broadened perspective or a deeper understanding of poverty from the Church's side is thus required to understand the multidimensional phenomenon of poverty so that the approach to poverty alleviation can become more holistic and sustainable. There is also a need on the side of the government, to engage in dialogue with the communities, paired with applied research, to determine the challenges that prevent the rooting out of poverty.

5.4.2 Improving social development programmes

Apart from the Justice and Peace Commission, the SACBC poverty alleviation programmes such as RDSP, REAP and the Society of St Vincent De Paul, are charity programmes which have proven not to be sustainable. According to Cooper (2019), although charity and humanitarian assistance seem to be key concepts within many religions, charity and social relief alone cannot be used as means of alleviating poverty. Rather, a holistic approach to development is needed. There is also a greater need for the Catholic Church to review its Social Teaching approach and to impart it

in a way that will enable people to understand their responsibilities toward one another in order for inequalities to be reduced.

5.4.3 Improving the livelihood of the communities

As indicated above, in order to ensure sustainability and improvement of livelihoods communities need to be involved. It is also crucial that households and communities are encouraged and capacitated to work towards improving their own lives by developing entrepreneurial skills, so that they do not only rely on government handouts, but also embark on income generating activities, even activities such as gardening.

5.4.4 Social justice

The purpose of the Justice and Peace Commission is to promote justice by raising awareness among the people about the causes of poverty. It is therefore of paramount importance that the Justice and Peace Commission should lobby for priorities in public spending to ensure that government resources are used in such a way that the poor really benefit, and that social justice is advanced. As it stands, the government is spending a lot of money on social grants instead of ensuring that more jobs are created.

There have been campaigns like “Fees Must Fall” in institutes of learning. It would be good for both REAP and the Justice and Peace Commission to engage in discourse with the government regarding affordable education.

The Justice and Peace Commission should also challenge political and economic decisions from the perspective of social justice.

5.5 AREAS FOR FUTURE STUDY

The Catholic Church has contributed immensely to improving the livelihoods of the poor through charitable works and the implementation of its mission, which includes caring for the poor or “option for the poor” as the Catholic Church calls it. However,

South African poverty is characterised by the gap between the rich and the poor. It would be fair if the rich could give back, that is, help the poor to improve or develop their livelihoods. The increasing gap between the rich and the poor calls for a deeper review of the implementations of the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church. Further study is required to find out how the Catholic Church can instil its teachings in the lives of the people to fight poverty and injustices in society, using Catholic Social Teaching as a tool for sustainability.

Many communities in South Africa are poor, probably because there is lack of involvement and participation. In most cases, top-down strategies for poverty alleviation are still used by different governments. However, communities themselves need to assess their needs and indicate what it is that they need and how they could be assisted, rather than the government proposing, and at times dictating measures that may not necessarily be in line with what the community needs.

Furthermore, communities should assess their needs and then present them to their respective government departments, which then also need to assess what is available. This also falls within the Catholic Social Teaching, referred to as subsidiarity, which refers to people being allowed to have a say instead of authorities deciding on their behalf.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE (UFS – HSD2021/1153/21)



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

30-Sep-2021

Dear Mr Molikeng Lebofa

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

The role of the Catholic Church in poverty alleviation, the case of Kopanong Local Municipality, Free State

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2021/1153/21

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Adri Du Plessis

Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

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APPENDIX B: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

Stakeholder Research Schedule

1. Which programmes does the church have for alleviation of poverty?
2. Have the strategies and programmes been successful in alleviating poverty?
3. Which challenges has the church experienced in terms of poverty alleviation?
4. What do you think the church should do differently?
5. Any other comments?

THANK YOU

Beneficiary Research Schedule

1. Are you aware of any poverty alleviation strategies within your church?
2. Which programmes has the church run in your area?
3. Have you ever been part of the planning of the programmes?
4. Have you ever been part of the implementation of the programmes?
5. How accessible are the programmes?
6. What did like most about these programmes?
7. What do you think the church should do differently to ensure poverty alleviation?
8. Any other comments?

THANK YOU

APPENDIX C: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

6th September 2021

Ref: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear Father Lebofa,

This letter serves to acknowledge that I received your request to conduct interviews among the Catholic members in my territory: Jagersfontein, Philippolis and Fauresmith. As a Parish Priest (Pastor) assigned to look after the souls of Catholic members in the areas mentioned above, I hereby grant you permission to go ahead with your interviews. I also spoke to some Christian faithfuls in our parish and obtained consent for you to come and do the interviews. I informed some of the church members that you have requested permission to come and conduct interviews in our parish. I explained that you are coming to do research and that the rules of conducting academic research thus need to be applied, such as:

- (1) Asking for the consent of the people to be interviewed;
- (2) Informing them that their privacy will be respected, should the interview demand such; and that
- (3) They are free to withdraw from participation in the interview at any time should they feel that they need to withdraw.

The people to whom I spoke and from whom I obtained consent for you to come and conduct your interviews, have accepted and are ready to give you the necessary data for your research. You are welcome to come and conduct the interviews in our parish at any time.

NB: I would also like to inform you that I did not speak to the whole congregation, but that, through the sampling method, I chose a few people whom you can start to interview. Should you need to interview a larger group, you may then apply the snowball method of research, whereby the people you interview may refer you to other relevant people who are informed and can help you to collect the necessary data.

I wish you good luck for your research.

Rev. Fr Michael Mapulanga (Ph.D.)

APPENDIX D: CERTIFICATE OF EDITING

Declaration by the Language Editor



Dr AF Panelatti

Freelance Language Editor and Consultant

Member of Professional Editors' Guild

E-mail: psychology@drpanelatti.com

Cell: 082 822 3532

P.O.Box 28061

Danburg

9310

9 December 2021

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

STATEMENT WITH REGARD TO LANGUAGE EDITING OF DISSERTATION

This is to certify that I have edited the following dissertation for English style and language usage.

Author: Augustinus Molikeng Lebofa

Student Number: 2009 101 300

Institution: University of the Free State

Dissertation: The Role of the Catholic Church in Poverty Alleviation: The Case of Kopanong Municipality, Free State.

Yours faithfully

Dr AF Panelatti

APPENDIX E: TURN IT IN RECEIPT AND REPORT



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THE ROLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN POVERTY ALLEVIATION: THE CASE OF KOPANONG MUNICIPALITY, FREE STATE

ORIGINALITY REPORT

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