

# Assessment of the contribution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Towards Poverty Alleviation in Molo Station, Rift Valley Province-Kenya.

**Authors: Ondicho Charles Nyandiri<sup>1</sup> (MA – Religious Studies, Kyambogo University); and Thomas Otieno Juma<sup>2</sup> (PhD Candidate – Political Science, Kisii University)**

Affiliation: Lecturer - Kisii University<sup>1</sup>; Lecturer – Moi University<sup>2</sup>.

*Email:* [ondicha80@gmail.com](mailto:ondicha80@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>/[thomasotienojuma@yahoo.com](mailto:thomasotienojuma@yahoo.com)<sup>2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

*This study assessed poverty and its alleviation, a special case of the Seventh-day Adventist Church contribution in Molo, formerly in Rift Valley Province (now in Nakuru County) in Kenya. The study in its detailed focus sought to; find out the causes of poverty in Molo area, establish the effects of poverty in Molo area, and lastly determine the contribution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church towards poverty alleviation. The study employed descriptive survey design with both qualitative and quantitative approaches. A sample of 388 respondents was selected from 57 churches by purposeful and snowball sampling methods. Data was collected using a questionnaire, interview schedule and observation. The study established that poverty manifested in various ways including lack of adequate food and clothing, malnutrition, poor housing conditions, illiteracy, dirty environment and dilapidated buildings and gardens. Generally, majority of the people lived in moderate poverty. The causes of poverty were social, economical, natural and political. The major causes were adverse climatic conditions like frost, poor infrastructure, unemployment, pest and diseases, human diseases, ethnic conflicts, loop-sided presentation of the gospel and political seclusion and marginalization. Subsequently, poverty had affected the people in a number of ways. It had hindered people from accessing basic social services like health despite causing other effects like deaths, school dropouts, illiteracy, environmental degradation, Ondicho Charles Nyandiri Thomas Otieno Juma, vol 5 issue 12, pp 1-20 December 2017*

*robbery, violence and social conflicts. Poverty had also led to prevalence of disease incidences, slow growth and development of the churches, members' withdrawal from churches and low return of tithes and offerings. The study concluded that those living in poverty are also likely to be least educated, the least served by economic and social infrastructure, living in areas less covered by public and private institutions and with limited linkages and opportunities to both local and regional economies, services and markets. The church had tried to reduce poverty by helping the poor in several ways but most of the efforts provided a short-term solution. Both the causes and effects of poverty were complex and interrelated. The study recommended; the church's need to explore in addition to short term solutions medium and long term measures, and a need for other stakeholders to combine their efforts in the fight against poverty alleviation for a better Molo Station.*

**Key Words:** Poverty/ Poverty Alleviation/ SDA/ Seventh day Adventist/ Molo/ Nakuru County/ Kenya/ Africa.

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND STUDY BACKGROUND:

Millennial Development Goals (MDGs) emphasis on poverty is undoubtedly the most aggressive. Among the seven goals, poverty stands out as the priority objective in achieving the others. This is obtained in their

respective documentations as  
([www.un.org/en/development](http://www.un.org/en/development));

- i. Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- ii. Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
- iii. Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
- iv. Goal 4: Reduce child mortality
- v. Goal 5: Improve maternal health
- vi. Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- vii. Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

This study is therefore anchored on this pillar of MDG objective one. In this order of goals, it is easy to deduce that it is a primary goal that precedes the fulfillment of the other goals. Despite this, it is not to say that other goals are not important. The reason behind this thinking is probably anchored on Maslowian - structure thought of meeting basics before other equally important needs.

It is paramount to concur that the existence of the church as a social institution is to enhance the good of the people in an whole round manner. It thus engages in poverty alleviation which MDGs imagine can be eradicated. According to [www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals), extreme poverty has declined significantly over the last two decades. In 1990, nearly half of the population in the developing world lived on less than \$1.25 a day; that proportion dropped to 14 per cent in 2015. Globally, the number of people living in extreme poverty has declined by more than half, falling from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 836 million in 2015. Most progress has occurred since 2000. The number of people in the working middle class—living on more than \$4 a day—has almost tripled between 1991 and 2015. This group now makes up half the workforce in the developing regions, up from just 18 per cent in 1991. The proportion of undernourished people in the developing regions has fallen by almost half since 1990, from 23.3 per cent in 1990–1992 to 12.9 per cent in 2014–2016. This paper presupposes that eradication of poverty may just remain as a goal as it is and demonstrated through statistics as shown by the MDG statistical aggregates.

In the turn of events, there is a transition taking place which further emphasizes on the need to deal with poverty by the global union of states through the UNDP.

The UNDP (2017) with its expanded goals now to 17 from the seven of MDGs splits the first two to address the issue of poverty. It posits, now these countries (global states) want to build on the many successes of the past 15 years, and go further. The new set of goals, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aims to end poverty and hunger by 2030. World leaders, recognizing the connection between people and planet, have set goals for the land, the oceans and the waterways. End extreme poverty in all forms by 2030. Yes, it's an ambitious goal—but we believe it can be done. In 2000, the world committed to cutting the number of people living in extreme poverty by half in 15 years and we met this goal. However, more than 800 million people around the world still live on less than \$1.25 a day—that's about the equivalent of the entire population of Europe living in extreme poverty. In the past 20 years, hunger has dropped by almost half. Many countries that used to suffer from famine and hunger can now meet the nutritional needs of their most vulnerable people. The same body – UNDP confirms the insurmountable task of eradication despite its imagination of the same by calling it ambitious. This is why this article like any academic discourse finds it appropriate to handle alleviation as opposed to eradication – a political statement of sorts.

Besides these instruments insights into poverty, Molo Station is densely populated and has several tribes but the major ones include Kikuyu, Kalenjin, and Kisii. It is an agricultural area and harbors 57 Seventh-day Adventist churches spread all over the station. The presence of several tribes has led to competition of natural resources especially land. This has caused frequent tensions followed by subsequent ethnic clashes, for example, clashes of 1992, 1997 and 2007/2008. These clashes have had a devastating effect on the socio-economic life of people, especially loss of life and property.

Historically, these tribes have been played against each other by the colonial government. The colonizing power, Great Britain, used tribal and ethnic differences to maintain herself in power. After Kenya's independence in 1963, these tribal differences continued to have a negative effect on the peoples of Kenya and have had a profoundly destructive effect upon those living in Molo Station. A local politician described Molo as the "hot bed of tribal clashes that has left many people desolate and

poor". The scarcity of resources (specifically land) has been one of the major issues for contention (Chazon Children Centre, 2012).

For several years, poverty has been a challenge to the people of Molo. When one transects across Molo, there is vivid and diverse manifestations of poverty among the people. This includes hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, lack of shelter and failure to access essential social services such as basic education, health, water and sanitation. This is a manifestation of poverty-stricken society. In fact, the rate of poverty in Molo has actually been increasing overtime since 1992 (Republic of Kenya, 1992).

This is when the region began experiencing ethnic conflicts and violence that destabilized many of the dwellers socially and economically. The prevalence of poverty has had serious effect on the social and economic development of the people in Molo Station. The effect is manifested in increased unemployment and high dependency ratio. This has led to increased demand for health services, agricultural land, fuel and forest products, over-crowding in educational facilities, and better housing (National Coordinating Agency, 2005). This means that any development in Molo must outstrip the aforesaid causes. Failure to realize this, the present poverty rate and its negative impacts are likely to worsen.

The National Coordinating Agency for Population and Development (NCAPD), tried to put effort to provide a strategic plan to develop Molo and other districts in Nakuru County. NCAPD recommended several institutions as the best suited to undertake programs to address the development issues in these regions. These institutions include Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as Local Community and NGO's, International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) and Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization (MYWO). Other Institutions include ministries such as Ministry of Planning and National Development, Ministry of Home Affairs, District Social Development Officers (DSDO) and Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and Ministry of Environment (National Coordinating Agency, 2005). Surprisingly, the church was left out in this strategic plan. This explains somehow why there is lack of enough reliable data on the contribution especially of the Seventh-day Adventist

Church towards poverty alleviation in Molo region. In fact, Molo situation is not far from what Kanyandago (2002) comments over Africa in general:

The cries of the poor pierce the night as mothers lose their beloved ones in the hospitals or at home because of failure to deal with preventable diseases. The wailing of the ritual mourners rise high during the day as bodies of beloved ones are brought home, some of them victims of senseless traffic accidents that can be prevented. Even more heart rendering cries rise out of refugee camps as millions of Africa are huddled in hot tents on a continent that can accommodate five times more the number of African population. The wailing of the parents cannot be stopped as they look at tombs that have swallowed their children who have been killed by AIDS, and nobody tells them that TB is killing more people than malaria and AIDS combined. These are some of the cries that can be heard, but there are more internal cries, which we will never hear.

Generally, since the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the early 1906 in Kenya, the church has always emphasized the principle of solidarity aimed at fighting poverty. In a bid to fight poverty, the church has initiated programs both at grassroots and national level to curb the problem of poverty through its teachings and organizations such as Adventist Relief Agency Kenya (ADRA). How much the church has done in Molo Station was a question of concern and this necessitated this study. In fact, there was need to carry out a multi-disciplinary approach towards understanding of the manifestation, causes and effects of poverty.

## 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Many churches as social organizations have taken it their duty to participate in socio-economic activities of their members to improve their welfare. Some of the churches have done well in the preaching of the gospel using various methods such as setting up schools and institutions of learning. This study found a gap that needed to be filled in relation to participation towards poverty alleviation. Why haven't churches out rightly engaged in it? And why the pessimism approach yet most church activities are for the peoples welfare? In an

attempt to answer such questions outside the objectives, the researchers thought to assess the contribution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church towards poverty alleviation in Molo Station (Church jurisdiction), Rift Valley Province-Kenya.

### 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper sought to;

- i. find out the causes of poverty in Molo area,
- ii. establish the effects of poverty in Molo area, and lastly
- iii. determine the contribution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church towards poverty alleviation.

### 4. METHODOLOGY

The main scheme employed in this study was descriptive survey design with both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Descriptive survey design was chosen because it helped to illustrate the information on the present existing conditions concerning poverty and the Seventh-day Adventists of Molo Station. This method enabled the researcher to describe the socio-economic manifestation of poverty, its causes, effects and efforts the Seventh-day Adventist Church is employing to alleviate it. Gathering and analyzing such information therefore demanded the use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

This study targeted Christians of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Molo Station. The researcher's interest in these Christians is because he is familiar with the area and its leaders and the church system. Thus, it was easy to organize and get data from them by the fact that he is a member and pastor of the very Seventh-day Adventist Church. The study targeted baptized members of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Molo Station who were about 1200. Out of the targeted population of about 1200, a representative sample was selected. A total of 388 respondents were thus sampled out to participate in the study. Of this, 120 respondents were also interviewed as much as they also filled the questionnaire. The formula suggested by Tara Yamane helped the researcher determine with 95 percent certainty of the results.

### 5. THE OVERRIDING DISCOURSE ON THE THESIS

The international development community (Chambers, 2006) has had poverty in focus for more than a decade. At summit meetings and other occasions, world leaders have stated and reconfirmed their agreement that poverty must be reduced and eventually eradicated. The political commitment is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for this to happen. Analysts, policy-makers and practitioners need appropriate concepts and dedicated measures to enable progress from rhetoric and general policy statements to action and results on the ground. The flood of development rhetoric on poverty, the primacy accorded by lenders and donors to the Millennium Development Goals, of which the reduction of extreme poverty is the first and usually considered the most important, and the frequency with which reducing, alleviating or eliminating poverty is seen as a prime goal and measure of development – these factors make it matter more than ever to know what poverty is. What it is taken to mean depends on who asks the question, how it is understood, and who responds.

The different prisms according to Chambers makes poverty to be distinctly be; income-poverty or its common proxy (because less unreliable to measure) consumption-poverty, material lack or want which includes lack of or little wealth and lack or low quality of other assets, third cluster of meanings derives from Amartya Sen and is expressed as capability deprivation (referring to what we can or cannot do, can or cannot be), and lastly being seen from developmental terms as a shift from illbeing to wellbeing which breeds equity and interventions to enhance wellbeing. He suggests, the word poverty translated into other languages carries different connotations. Alternately, UNHCHR (2012), views it the perspectives of rights; “The human rights approach underlines the multidimensional nature of poverty, describing poverty in terms of a range of interrelated and mutually reinforcing deprivations, and drawing attention to the stigma, discrimination, insecurity and social exclusion associated with poverty”. Whichever perspective taken to understand poverty, the Pandora box opens for its alleviation. This confirms that knowing an issue is a process of its solution.

## 5.1 Finding out the causes of poverty in Molo area

The dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been marked by poverty of billions of men and women. Poverty has become one great issue confronting not only the church, but also the governments and other institutions and such as NGOs worldwide. Poverty has actually been recognized as the most central challenge to the development of human society especially in developing countries. This problem has been majorly accelerated by both regional and global disparity. This disparity is evident in wealth creation, possession and distribution, peoples' attitude towards it, corruption, religious factors and climatic change among others (Ondari, 2001). All these factors occur within social structure and systems which is also a major cause of poverty. Aylward believes that social structure is a cause of poverty. Citing him in Tinkasiimire 's article, he says:

The poor in Africa usually know quite well what has to be done to alleviate their condition. They yearn for liberation from the structures of poverty, but they see very little help coming from the authorities that are responsible for running their countries. They are disgusted by the selfishness of the affluent ruling classes, by their greed and very often by their corruption (Tinkasiimire, 2012).

Ndungu attributes poverty to both external and internal structure. To him, internal factors have aggravated the situation already worsened by external factors. He argues that many regions in Africa have witnessed the rise into power ruthless dictators and oppressive military rulers. These rulers have siphoned resources from their countries in order to remain in power. Their main concern is political survival at the expense of economic development and welfare of the people they rule (Ndungu, 2002). He adds that greed and corruption leaders have contributed greatly to misery by depriving and marginalizing the vulnerable and poor (Ndungu, 2002).

According to Society for International Development (SID), inequality causes poverty. Inequality means unequal wealth creation, acquisition and distribution. Kenya has been described as highly unequal, ranking among the top ten most unequal countries in the world and fifth in Africa. Inequality is worse in rural areas: the

richest 20% of the rural and urban populations earn 62% and 51% of incomes, respectively, while the bottom 20% earns 3.5 % of rural income and 5.4% of urban income (SID, 2004). Inequality has negative effects on growth of people's socio-economic lives in almost every part of the country.

According to Shah, the causes of poverty are diverse. The causes are: poor people's lack of resources, an extremely unequal income distribution in the world and within specific countries, overpopulation, high birth rates and lack of education. Others include environmental degradation, economic trends, epigraphic shifts, high rate of unemployment, unfair trades, corruption, and poor governance, among others (Shah, 2012).

NCAPD report of 2010 revealed that rapid population growth has contributed to poverty. Land has been fragmented into uneconomic holdings leading to environmental degradation. Other problems related to overpopulation include increasing street children and families (NCAPD, 2010). Population increase has also exerted pressure on the limited resources. IFAD's report notes that population density in high-potential areas is more than six times the country's average of 55 people per km<sup>2</sup>. This constitutes an overwhelming pressure on resources. Kenya's poor rural people include: smallholder farmers, herders, farm laborers, unskilled and semi-skilled workers, households headed by women, people with disabilities and AIDS orphans (Ongaro, 2006). A large population in Molo comprises majorly of these categories of people hence it is prone to the degrading effects of poverty.

Commenting on high population growth rate as a cause of poverty, Ndungu observes that Kenya population pyramid is broad based where 54% of the population is below 15 years (UNF, 1991). This in turn results in a high dependence ration. Kenya has one of the highest dependency burdens. Every person in the labor force bracket has more than one person outside the labor bracket awaiting support. The situation leads to more resources being geared to consumption rather than to investment (Ndungu, 2002).

Meanwhile, the World Bank Report of 2000 did an assessment of the economy and poverty. It established that, the world had been experiencing an economic decline in the past two decades resulting to high poverty

rate. The situation had continued to deteriorate. This is due to oil crisis, Human Immuno Deficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) scourge, volatile world prices for the exports and the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) at both grassroots and national levels. The impact of socio-economic costs of these adjustments constituted a major concern for many people. Subsequently, the number of people living below the poverty line had consistently remained high (World Bank, 2000). Lack of adequate data has constrained any precise assessment of the impact of economic decline especially on the most vulnerable groups. These groups include the landless, pastoralists and female-headed households in the country. According to Wafula in World Bank report, external trends and shocks can also cause poverty. These shocks include natural and man-made disasters. Others are rapid population growth and urbanization, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, structural adjustment and debt repayments, have all contributed to the increase of poverty.

The NCAPD organization in its assessment of the causes of poverty in 2005 indicated that the causes of poverty in Nakuru District were diverse. They included unemployment, landlessness, lack of water, insecurity, lack of basic services such as health and education, and lack of credit facilities. In this study, women and children, unemployed and elderly people formed segments of the most affected members of the society (NCAPD, 2010). The report by NCAPD further emphasized that land clashes had played a major role in the current state of poverty. Land lashes were creating tension, insecurity, forced migration, destruction of life and property, and wastage of time which would otherwise have been directed towards productive activities. Female-headed households were particularly affected by poverty in the district. This study therefore endeavoured to ascertain whether these causes of poverty in Molo still existed.

On the other hand, Karemi observes that there are strong linkages between poverty and environmental degradation. He particularly points out that poor water management, soil erosion, declining soil fertility and land degradation as the major causes of poverty. He further asserts that, the effects of climate change are undermining an already fragile resource base. This has contributed to declining agricultural yields over the past

decades (Karemi, Undated). In recent years, drought has become a perennial problem in some parts of Kenya. For instance, episodes in 2009-2011 generated food emergencies, while flooding affected parts of the country severely such as Nyanza, Nakuru, Tana River and the coastal regions.

Another major cause of poverty according to Shah is tribal affinities. These have been found to be a source of considerable conflict within Kenya. Diverse ethnic groups have been competing since independence for land, financial resources and political power. These conflicts have rendered many families poor. For example, the ethnic tribal clashes of 1992, 1997 and 2007, are blamed to have played a major role in the current state of poverty. They created tension, insecurity, forced migration and destruction of life and property. Many people were left homeless and unemployed.

Ndungu also notes that ethnicity has of late become a prevalent scourge in a number of African countries. Politically motivated ethnic clashes have resulted in loss of life and destruction of property acquired over long period of time. Men, women and children have been turned into refugees and beggars within and without their areas. The cases of Burudi, Somalia, Sudan, Rwanda and Kenya are still fresh in our mind. Molo is still trying to heal from the wounds of ethnic violence witnessed in 1992, 1997 and 2007/2008.

HIV/AIDS is one of the major causes of poverty. It is most prevalent among young and middle-aged Kenyans, the most productive segment of the population. According to UN Habitat Organization, the illness leaves orphans and households headed by women that are even more vulnerable to poverty. HIV/AIDS weighs heavily on both the country and Kenyan families. This affects income, food security and development potential. Life expectancy fell to 46 years in 2006, but has since risen to over 55 years (UNH, 2012). According to UN Habitat Organization Report, AIDS has been a major set back in fighting poverty. A considerable amount of resources is spent on AIDS patients and for the orphans left behind by the dead victims of AIDS. According to Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)'s survey on the effect of AIDS in Kenya, HIV/AIDS reduces economic growth potential and private sector employment opportunities, and erodes the tax base. Consequently, it negatively undermines domestic resource mobilization. It impacts

severely on the ability to deliver services and diverts resources that could be otherwise deployed towards provision of basic needs and the responsibilities associated with governance (ECA, 2004).

Kanyandago however has a different view to the afore quoted authors on the factors that cause poverty. He cites external negative forces such as slave trade, colonialism and racist evangelization which have not disappeared to date. He also mentions the scandal of external debt that has and continues to make many African countries poorer due to loan payment with huge interest rates. Kanyandago further says that African elites who should be the solutions of African problems are the same people who have considered local experts as archaic, primitive and backward. Instead of consulting them, they instead describe them with denigrating terms like villagers, uneducated, peasants and illiterate. They forget that these are the people with solid solutions to African problems where poverty is one of them. To this class of elites, the theologians are inclusive. Instead of theologizing consonant with the cries and struggle of our people, they are recycling theological ideas which are offensive.

Tinkasiimire laments that some religious teachings contribute towards poverty. For example, there are Christian Organizations which emphasize the second coming of Christ at the expense of present life. This makes believers fail to engage in efforts that fight poverty or improve their living standards. Other church denominations do not send their children to school hence promoting illiteracy. Others misquote bible texts, for example, Matt. 6:34 and see no need to plan for tomorrow since the "Lord will provide." There is also a view of procrastination, which makes some believers procrastinate their planning instead of raising their economic standards. On the same note, some religious organizations offer teachings that discourage believers from joining local saving and credit groups to save for tomorrow. They see this as gambling. Other churches discourage the taking of insurance cover since God is the one to care for the unforeseen.

According to Network of Ecofarming in Africa Kenya (NECOFA), the increasing rate of poverty in Molo is partially linked to a number of causative factors. These include erratic weather patterns, vast regions of arid desert and poor government policies. Periods of drought are crippling, not only for the food supply, but for jobs as

well. Other causes include ethnic conflicts, high population growth rate, lack of employment opportunities and illiteracy (NECOFA, 2011). As a result, the majority of Molo Station dwellers who are peasant farmers are lavishing in poverty.

According to SID report of 2004, real causes of poverty could serve to paint the overall picture when countries are the units of analysis. However, an accurate picture of causes of poverty requires more micro-level information. Such information can be obtained on the basis of detailed household surveys or community mapping to produce high quality data. The most dominant approach to assembling data for poverty analysis at the individual level relies on classic household surveys. At this level, survey instruments are administered to households. That is why this study sought to find out the causes of poverty at a micro level by assessing Christians in their very homes.

The literature reviewed (NCAPD) shows that there are numerous causes of poverty. Kenya is one of the world's fastest population growth rates. Over the past 30 years, the population has more than tripled, greatly increasing pressure on the country's resources. Together with a widening income gap, this has eroded gains in education, health, food security, employment and income. This study aimed at finding out the causes of poverty in Molo Station.

## 5.2 Establishing the effects of poverty in Molo area

Indeed poverty in Ondari's word is considered a major constraint to any form of development. It poses a dramatic problem of justice all over the world in its various forms and with its various effects. Consequently, it thwarts the hope of the church. This is characterized by an unequal growth that does not recognize the equal rights of all people nor exercise these rights equally in the economy. This situation makes it impossible for the church to bring about that full humanism that it has been struggling to restore.

Sachs remarks that, poverty is the world's current greatest threat to peace and stability. It is worse than terrorism and other highly publicized struggles. Sachs adds that more than eight million people around the world die each year because they are too poor to stay

alive. Their plight is hardly articulated because the public hardly comments about it. They live in extreme poverty and struggle daily for survival (Sachs, 2005).

Ongaro too notes that poverty leads to environmental degradation. He notes that the interaction between the poor and the environment has resulted in undesirable consequences which have contributed to the worsened poverty state in the country. He asserts that, poor population engage in activities such as poor cultivation methods, burning of trees to produce charcoal, poor sewage disposal among others. Such activities have negatively affected the environment. They have also reduced the land potential particularly in the pastoralist arid and semi-arid areas. This makes the struggle for survival hard and leading to over-exploitation of land and water resources. Any person with visible history of Molo Station will agree that environment degradation has been a major problem in the district. There is high incidence of deforestation, environmental degradation and poor waste disposal methods. For instance, the once green forests that occupied most of the land in Molo are no longer there.

According to Obal (2011), poverty affects the vulnerable including children, orphans and women. For example, traditional systems of social support are weakening and men are increasingly reluctant to enter formal unions with women (marriage unions) to enhance a supportive livelihood. Obal further notes that households headed by women tend to be poor due to added responsibilities on the woman. Women are unable to provide adequate parental care to the children especially during infancy and childhood. A good number of these household heads who are young are not physically, emotionally and even economically ready for this additional duty that befalls them.

According to Mukui, poverty causes malnutrition. Usually, poverty affects income, expenditure and food intake of the people. Mukui notes that poverty leads to amount of calorie intake. Poverty hinders families from taking enough meal with balanced diet. Children sometimes are deprived of important nutrients like vitamins and proteins leading to diseases like kwashiorkor. Mukui further notes that taking a balanced diet is determined by accessibility to other basic needs like health and education (Mukui, 2004). For this reason, it was prudent for the researcher to find out whether poverty hindered Adventists from accessing basic

services. This includes water and sanitation, basic education and shelter as part of basic ingredients to proper food habits, food preparation and absorption.

Another effect of poverty is lack of health care services. Mukui observes that improving healthcare provision constitutes the single most important aspect for policy intervention in Kenya. However, three other reasons combine with health to influence decline into poverty in rural villages. These are heavy expenses related to funerals, large family size, and small landholdings. Large family size and land subdivision are often closely related. Households seem to increasingly recognize these to be risk factors for deepening poverty. This results to a growing acceptance of family planning within these communities. This study therefore investigated how poverty had hindered availability, acquisition and access of social services like health and clean water. It also investigated what the church had done in issues of family planning, provision of health services and education in helping the Christians come out of poverty and live better lives.

According to Wafula, poverty has affected the urban dwellers in several ways. He notes that poverty has led to lack of essential services such as water and sanitation. This has left the population prey to serious health hazards. It has also caused poor hygiene and diseases, subdivision of land and inward migration, insufficient essential services such as schools has led to illiteracy. This in turn makes it even harder for residents to find jobs, or to develop the knowledge and skills to secure an income. Consequently, absence of local health facilities, remoteness and high cost of accessing even limited services leads to low life expectancy and increase in infant mortality.

Wafula further comments that income levels for the three low-income neighborhoods in Molo have gone down since 1980. Most government departments were active in the 1970s and 1980s but in 1990s and 2000s, services such as education, roads, water declined. Administration, security and garbage collections have also been scaled down. Inaccessibility of essential infrastructure and services has had a detrimental effect on people's livelihoods.

Generally, poverty according to Shah is present in every society. Poverty robs human beings of their most basic



rights. It keeps people hungry. It deprives them of medical care, clean water, an education, the opportunity to work. It often results in a sense of powerlessness, hopelessness, and inequality. Every day, more than 24,000 children die worldwide due to preventable conditions created by poverty.

Commenting on effects of poverty, Mwaura says that poverty has led to chronic food shortages, debilitating diseases and pervasive illiteracy. It has also led to environmental degradation, mismanagement of resources, deteriorating living standards, shortened life span, corruption, external dependency, and crushing foreign debts (Mwaura, 2002). Social effects of poverty include sharpening social tensions generated by unequal distribution of wealth, rising criminality among the youth, and ethnic-religious conflicts. African politically is a region of permanent unrest (aaron, 1997).

The reviewed literature indicates that poverty impacts negatively both on the poor and the rich, urban and rural dwellers in diverse ways. The effect is social, spiritual and economical. The environment has not been left behind. Poverty hinders social service access, acquisition and availability and this has left many people suffering. However, much of these observations are generalized. Therefore, there was need to carry a specific study to ascertain these effects of poverty in the lives of Seventh-day Adventists in Molo Station.

### **5.3 Determining the contribution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church towards poverty alleviation**

A number of measures have been taken by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in an attempt to help its members and the society come out of the plight poverty. Failure and hiccups of the church in matters of poverty alleviation have also been discussed. Moreover, literature from various authors and church policy manuals have been cited in order to provide a clear understanding of the philosophy of the church in fighting poverty.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that their philosophy of and involvement in development and relief aid is authorized in concept and outlined in scope by the Holy Scriptures. The concern for the less fortunate in the society led to the establishment of international relief agencies; Seventh-day Adventist World Service (SAWS)

and Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). The aim of establishing such organizations was to help the less fortunate in times of crisis and also in establishment of long term projects aimed at relieving them from various calamities like poverty. This is well outlined even by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists East-Central Division where Kenya lies.

The aforesaid agencies are international and they carry humanitarian activities in the whole world where need arises. However, there are other numerous organizations in many local churches that carry similar activities to help the local population. ADRA has taken a forefront stage in helping the poor compared to SAWS. ADRA is a humanitarian development and relief agency. Through its financial, material and technical resources, supports, rehabilitates and enhances the quality of life and well-being of communities and citizens in developing countries with particular attention to the extremely deprived. They endeavour to do this without reference to ethnic, political or religious association, and in a manner that encourages self-reliance and self-determination. Because of its Biblical perspectives, the Seventh-day Adventist Church regards as germane its involvement in development and relief aid through ADRA. This organization has been established to express the Church's concerns in this area and to meet several other objectives along the same line.

The Seventh-day Adventist church advocates for sacred standards of living. This calls for its members to live according to the will of God and adherence of church's ethical principles which are Bible based. This incorporates personal and collective responsibility for the social welfare of church members and the entire community, society and the nation at large where the church operates. This principle is outlined in the church's manual:

While our "citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20), we are yet in the world as an integral part of human society and must share with our fellow citizens certain responsibilities in the common problems of life. Wherever we live, as children of God we should be recognized as outstanding citizens in our Christian integrity and in working for the common good. While our highest responsibility is to the Church and the gospel commission, we should support by our service and our

means, as far as possible and consistent with our beliefs, efforts for social order and betterment. Even though we must stand apart from political and social strife, we should always, quietly and firmly, maintain an uncompromising stand for justice and right in civic affairs, along with full adherence to our religious convictions. It is our sacred responsibility to be loyal citizens of the nations to which we belong, rendering “to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:21).

Based on the fundamental philosophy outlined above, the philosophy of the church to help the less fortunate does not therefore end with the church's organizations. It is the responsibility of the church at all levels in hierarchy beginning with every individual church member. It is a responsibility that cuts across the entire system of the church. In order to take care of the less fortunate, the church has a plan budget on its local contribution where certain amount is devoted to the need. In fact, this is well articulated in the church's manual as stated below:

Offerings for the poor and needy are taken to assist the members who require help. A reserve fund should be kept for such emergency cases. In addition, the church should take a benevolent attitude toward all in need, and the board may make appropriations from this fund to assist the church’s health and welfare work for families in the community.

This study thus assessed whether the various programs, procedures and work plans of the church and its humanitarian organizations were being implemented in Molo Station. The contribution of the church towards poverty alleviation was assessed in wholesome perspective involving several aspects. This includes church teachings and involvement of the church organizations like ADRA in poverty alleviation. This also looked into issues like embracing of seminars and workshops, efforts employed geared to incorporate other stakeholders like the government and the role of the church in empowering its members to be economically stable.

The study investigated how the aforesaid measures had been implemented in the local churches. However, the contributions of international church organizations like ADRA are not discussed here because these bodies had not contributed anything towards poverty alleviation in

Molo Station. This section thus discusses efforts employed by the local churches to fight poverty as well as failures of the church regarding the same.

From the study findings, it was established that the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Molo Station had somehow contributed towards poverty alleviation. This was done through relieving the less fortunate in the following ways. The study assessed how much the church had done in helping the poor in the church and the community to come out of poverty. It was discovered that the church lacked a systematic plan of collection and disbursement of finance and other humanitarian assistance to its members and the community in need. Nevertheless, it rendered some help occasionally as need arose. The same trend cut across all the churches. The following are of the social responsibilities the SDA Church in Molo has been doing in relieving people who are poor.

**Table 1:** Church Activities aimed at fighting poverty

Church activities alleviating poverty	Frequency	%
Collecting money for charitable activities	319	82.2
Helping the bereaved families	277	71.4
Paying of hospital, funeral and burial expenses	280	72.2
Helping the sick financially and morally	235	60.6
Farming for families who are sick	212	54.6
Paying schools fees for needy and poor students	248	63.9
Building homes for the homeless	176	45.4
Helping ethnic violence victims with homes and food	194	50.0

**n=388**

From the study as shown in the table above, the SDA Church in Molo Station has been carrying out various activities aimed at helping the poor people out of poverty and overcome the challenges associated with poverty. This include collection of funds from the members for charitable acts (82.2%), helping the bereaved families (71.4%) by paying of hospital, funeral and burial bills (72.2%), helping the sick financially and morally (60.6%), carrying out farming activities like tilling the land and planting for the families who are sick (54.6%), paying schools fees for needy and poor students (63.9%), building homes for the homeless (45.4%) and Helping ethnic violence victims with homes and food (50.0%).

The study investigated further through the interviews to know exactly how these activities were being carried out. The SDA Church through its members has been supporting the bereaved families with funeral and burial expenses when a family loses one of its members through death. The local church makes an impromptu arrangement and visits the family, spends time with it and offers help in form of finance or material support like food, firewood and water. Funerals and burials in Kenya are usually expensive because of the long period that elapses between death and burial. The community and the church always come in to lighten this burden.

Besides helping bereaved families, the church members have been helping the sick within themselves in various occasions. During the field study, I came across cases where the bread winner was one and terminally ill in some families. This was mostly found on women whose husbands had died or divorced. There were special cases, to note, of sick women who have been depending on the church for food and monetary support. Sometimes the church goes an extra mile in paying for farm operations from ploughing to harvesting as a measure of ensuring that the family in point had food in future. Moreover, the members also contributed some money to meet medical expenses and children's school fees among other expenses. However, the assistance rendered has been partial because the economic ability of most church members is low and they too have demanding individual and family challenges in their homes.

Along the same line, the church has on infrequent occasions contributed towards sponsoring pupils and students from poor family background with school fees. This has also been taking place as an impromptu activity

without any strategic planning. Few students have benefited from such contributions even though the help had not been consistent. It is always done once or twice as the need arises and follow-ups are hardly done. This can be attributed partly to the fact that the church has so many programs that need attention. Individual needs are therefore attended occasionally as emergencies and forgotten thereafter.

There are other emergencies which have been arising in the community that the church has been extending its hand to. At times, houses of people especially the poor and aged have fallen down and the church has been helping them by setting up new structures for them. In many occasions, the dismantled houses have been made of grass but the church has been replacing the grass with iron sheet. In dire cases, besides constructing houses for the victims, the church has also been buying items like utensils and clothes for the victims. The money used in the aforementioned programs is from the local church budget offerings, church groups' contribution or money collected collectively once a need arises.

It is important to note that both Adventists and non Adventists have been benefiting from the church in this line. This is in fulfillment of Jesus' teaching that it is important to help even the strangers. He set a good example by associating with the sinners, sick, outcasts, children and less privileged in the society. He mingled with the sick, sinners, strangers and outcasts as an example of selfless service rendering to all people regardless of their status and ethnic orientation (Scheffler, 2011).

As outlined in Bible, the teaching of Jesus appears to go further than the Law in relation to whom generosity must be shown. Whilst the Law required that generosity and care (Martin, 1986) should be shown to the poor among God's people (essentially the aim of the collection in 2 Cor. 8:1ff), the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk.10:25-37), and Jesus' commands in Luke 6:27-36 necessitate that the scope of neighbourly love and generosity be radically extended to include complete strangers and even enemies (Nolland, 1998). "Only by these means can they [Jesus' followers] live out their lives in the sphere in which they have heard from Jesus the good news to the poor."

In the case of the victims of ethnic violence, respondents said that the church conference contributed some money to some churches to help the victims who had lost their homes and property. The donation given was 30,000kshs to each church (for the few that benefited). For example Rironi Seventh-day Adventist Church received 30,000kshs after the 2007/2008 post election violence but this was hardly enough. Over 90% of the church members lost their houses and property worth hundreds of thousands so this help could not have a greater implication. 30,000kshs was therefore like a drop of water in a sea.

The foregoing examples show that the church has not been reluctant completely. It has been trying to help the less privileged in the society. This is in line with what the early Christian church did. Acts 4:32-36 does clearly demonstrate the early Christian church's willingness to distribute resources, which came into its possession, to those in need (v.34b-35). This was something apparently done to such a degree that Luke could boldly use the language of Deuteronomy and claim, "there were no needy people among them" (v.34a). This implies that the Adventist church in Molo has to do much more to reach this level.

In fact, the researcher observed that cases of needy people in Molo are numerous and needs massive support to satisfy them. Even though the church has been labouring towards helping the unfortunate, this does not mean that it has exhausted its avenues of help. The assistance has not been extensive as such. There were other cases which the researcher met that had not received any help from the church. Respondents admitted that there is laxity in returning tithes and offering and this was confirmed by the church members themselves and even the pastors during the interview exercise. Nevertheless, the church needs to be encouraged to put more effort in the good work it is doing in helping the needy people in the society.

Giving however needs some limits or else the giver will be in problems if too much is given than can be earned. Paul provides a good example as to how far the church should help the poor. It is evident that whilst Paul, like the Law, encouraged (2 Cor. 8:7-15), and even commanded generosity (1 Tim. 6:17) in the early church, it was not his intention that its members should practice generosity to the point of becoming impoverished

themselves. Despite the fact that Paul commended the Macedonians for doing so (2 Cor. 8:1-3), his words to the Corinthians clearly indicates that the underlying intention is that each believer, as an expression of love, should give in accordance with their means (2 Cor. 8:8-12) in order that there might be greater equality between them (2 Cor. 8:13).

Paul's quotation of Exodus 16:18, 'he that collected much did not have too much, and he that gathered little did not have too little,' (2 Cor. 8:15) directly after his challenge to the Corinthians to give, adds weight to this argument, as well as suggesting the futility of hoarding for an uncertain future (Wheeler, 1995).

One best way of eradicating poverty is through establishment of sustainable projects and businesses to enable the people earn an income. This is one of the major objectives as to why ADRA organization was established. In the entire station, there was no long lasting income generating project established by the church. The few projects that were there belonged to some groups in the church like the youth and women groups.

Some of the groups found to have projects include Murinduku and Olposmuru. Maussomit Church District has a school (Kamara Adventist Primary School) while Molo has two schools (Rift Valley Adventist Secondary Schools and Mwangaza Adventist Primary School). However, the management of these schools have been poor as the respondents said. For example, Kamara School is in pathetic condition and Rift Valley Adventist has been there for so long but very stagnant. Elburgon church used to have a project of planting beans, cabbages and potatoes for sale but as in many churches, the project died a natural death some years back.

The challenge with these projects is that the organizers did not have proper strategic planning but we cannot blame them as such. Most of the church members were illiterate on matters of income generating projects. That is why some were engaged in digging people's farms to get some money while their gardens were in disarray. I wish they had devoted this time and energy to work on their farms; they could have contributed greatly towards poverty alleviation in their homes and the church.

Christians' life is always shaped by the teachings they receive from their spiritual leaders in church (Lang,

1982). For example, most Adventists return tithes and offering faithfully once a stewardship seminar has been conducted in their church. After sometime, if no other seminar is conducted to revitalize them, the giving graph curves down (Cleins, 1987). This tends to apply to all other activities of the church. Another good example is when a very well known Christian with regular standing dies in church. Church members become humble, sorrowful and more devoted towards their faith and churches activities. The vitality however gradually dies away as the memories of the loss of the beloved member fades away.

This implies that engagement in constructive activities that generate income comes along with better teachings in the church. This includes seminars and workshops that help church members to enlighten them on entrepreneurship enterprises and establishment of income generating activities. From the study findings, it was established that church pastors laboured tirelessly to provide stewardship seminars to their church members. This had fostered considerable improvement in the returning of tithes and offering. However, teachings on stewardship centered on giving, that is, returns of tithes and offering. Sadly, church members were not taught on how to make wealth or money so that they can have something to give. The level of their income therefore remained the same or even dwindled at times. That is why some had run away from the churches as established earlier on in this study.

## 6. MEASURES TAKEN TOWARDS ERADICATION OF POVERTY

Regarding poverty alleviation, this study dwells mainly on Christians since the study focuses on the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Poverty is a threat to the existence of humanity in modern times, especially in the developing countries of the world. The worst hit is countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The millennium development agenda set to reduce poverty by a half by the year 2015. Poverty reduction is therefore now an overriding priority for all major donors and most development agencies.

Despite the obliging effort of all the stake holders, poverty still abides and the rate is growing especially in Kenya. Discovering this challenge, Ondari observes that the ways and means of eradicating poverty are now

intensely studied and researched in several academic disciplines. The government, on-governmental organizations and other institutions have spent tremendous amounts of resources and time on this problem for several generations.

A study conducted by Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) in 2005 suggests that, successive analysis of the causes and effects of poverty need to look into detailed issues that touch all aspects of human life. It recommends that future poverty plans should include various components. These Mukui suggests include livelihoods, soils, financial institutions, roads, markets, social infrastructure, and the relationship between poverty and the ecosystem. The assessments should also indicate the sources of income in particular areas. This study actually sought to find out whether the church's effort to curb poverty has developed plans that encompass these factors.

According to Warigia, the church's leaders are advantaged to be within the circles of the wealthiest society. Using their influence, they have been urging the churches, institutions and nations to strengthen and expand efforts to address the scandal of widespread poverty around the world. Subsequently, the Gospel and the Christians' ethical principles place their service of the poor and vulnerable and their work for justice at the center of Christian life, mission and witness (Warigi, 2012).

The effort to fight poverty (John Paul 1988) is motivated by the Christian teaching to care and provide for the poor; following the example of Jesus. This has found a strong motivation in the preferential love of its members for the poor championed by most churches of the ecumenical movement. In this hope, the church has been encouraging its adherents to view the poor amongst themselves not as a problem, but as potential people who can become principal builders of a new and moral human future for everyone. This study assessed how much the Adventists had helped the poor among them in overcoming poverty in Molo.

Likewise, Mukui recommends that, permanent and genuine success in reducing poverty requires greater commitment and concrete action by all stakeholders. This includes churches, neighborhoods, communities and faith-based organizations. Others are governments,

families and individuals both in the market and private sector. Even though Mukui believes the church also has to play a central role towards poverty alleviation, less has been done to assess the contribution of the church in this sector. Poverty is a bad fate that needs to be addressed with urgency.

Nyaundi notes that Christian Organizations and movements have made concerted efforts towards the eradication of poverty. A good example of such organization is the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK). This is achieved through church organization. These organizations operate vocational centres, educational establishment and training centres where they offer professional skills in poverty eradication. Tinkasiimire adds that some organization encourage agricultural production by teaching on good methods of farming, rendering credit facilities and materials necessary for production. In addition, some offer health and education facilities and skills, participate in refugee resettlement, and also empowerment of women and other vulnerable members of the society.

According to Kanyandago, solving the paradox of poverty should not be a difficult task as it has been presented. This is because Africa is richly endowed and God has chosen it with its people and given it the anthropological task of setting a foundation of human advancement. Kanyandago advises that people and theologians must work together to eliminate all that produces the cries of the people. He further asserts that, in eliminating poverty, the concept of self-reliance must be taken seriously since this is the landmark of the economic systems in Africa. He moreover adds that people in Africa need to build using its rich culture. This can be achieved by using African symbols. These symbols pull together the different aspects of experience such as consciousness and unconsciousness, individual and social, historical past and immediate present. This helps the people rediscover the realities in their lives as far as poverty is concerned and their potential in curbing this problem.

Mildred observes that the church's common faith compels its members to action. Jesus teaches that when Christians serve and stand with the less privileged, they serve and stand with Him. The Bible teaches in hundreds of places that the God we worship has a special concern for the poor. God judges individuals and societies by

how they respond to the needs of the poor. As members in Christian churches together, there is a belief that a renewed commitment to overcome poverty is central to the mission of the church and essential to their unity in Christ. Therefore in order to obey God, respect the dignity of every person, and promote the common good of society, Christians must act (Mildred, 2009).

Likewise, Barrett (2011) notes that Christians should take lead in fighting poverty. Christianity should realize that Christian love leads to denunciation, proposals and a commitment to cultural and social projects. This prompts positive activity that inspires all who sincerely have the good of humanity at heart to make their contribution. This requires joint acceptance of responsibility, a responsibility inspired by an integral and shared humanism. Relieving the suffering and setting others free from the snares of poverty, oppression and injustice is an integral responsibility which demands every Christian to participate. How much the Seventh-day Adventist Church has achieved and what it ought to do was a question of concern for this study.

Katangole (2002) says that, in a bid to eradicate poverty, our theologizing is very crucial. He affirms that theology needs to play more crucial role in the face of the economic realities of globalization. He notes that scripture offers three basic models of the church. One of them is political church implying that a political church is one that readily serves. According to Tinkasiimire, it is the mission of the religious men and women to participate in the liberation of the poor following the example of Jesus who loved and served the poor. It is their duty to be the voice of the poor. To achieve this, the religious have to reflect on the meaning of the evangelical poverty. They should make a distinction between poverty as an evangelical counsel to be promoted and poverty as an evil to be fought. She further notes that religious leaders can fulfill this mission of fighting poverty by denouncing evil and sinful establishment of bribery, oppressions of the poor and corruption.

Ndungu suggests that, to eradicate poverty, concerted effort is called upon. Most importantly, the root cause of poverty must be addressed such as ignorance, corruption and unemployment. Secondly, socio-economic structures that empower victims of poverty should be created. The poor should be educated about their economic rights and

empowered at the same time to restore hope in their lives. Commenting on the same, Mwaura says that the church has a role to play in this task. It should give relief to the suffering poor and advocate for structural change at both the micro and macro levels of the society. Likewise, Dorr (1991) says that the church should make an option for poor:

Making an option for the poor means is not to opt for poverty but to opt for the people. It is to commit oneself to acting and living in a way that respects people especially those who are not treated with respect in our society. It is to proclaim by one's actions that people are more important than the systems that deprive them of the basic rights.

The reviewed literature above reveals that the dimensions of poverty are many. While priorities vary, greater weight should be given to poor people's crying. This crying is against the agony of hunger and sickness, the deprivations of lack of work, the anxiety of insecurity, the injustice of discrimination, the frustration of powerlessness and the denial of opportunities to children. These indeed challenge Christians to think beyond the narrow disciplinary boundaries and face the problem in its totality. Poverty hinders, affects and interferes with the complete development of human beings that is socially, mentally, physically and spiritually. This therefore calls for an integrated and practical approach in teaching Christians to handle the problem of poverty.

It is also evident as by Mwaura from the foregoing discussion that poverty has different dimensions depending on a number of factors. For example, where one lives (rural or urban), type of family structure, among others. It is indeed extremely difficult to distinguish clearly between causes, symptoms and problems of poverty. The classification of these categories depends among other things on the way in which the observer explains poverty (Munker, 1996). Therefore, there is need of policies for sustainable measures to be put in place. These include food cultivation, initiation of income generating projects, creation of other employment opportunities, and educational awareness on new methods of farming coupled with variety of crops. This will help diversify food production and income generation. This is to help the majority rural population that relies on the inadequate

subsistence farming for their own production of food. Subsequently, this will increase income that can not only sustain the rural population but even the ever increasing town population. It is true Molo Station has potential for the development of the key sectors of the economy.

A general framework needs to be formulated, which insists that overcoming poverty requires more personal and broader institutional and societal responsibility. This should encompass both better choices by individuals and better policies and investments by other stakeholders like the church, NGO's and the government. They should all venture in renewing wholesome families and intensification cost-effective inducements. The latter concern needs an involvement of the church. This is because Christianity plays a leading and central role in establishing strong families, which are the pillars of the society. This study endeavored to establish what role the Seventh-day Adventist Church has played towards poverty alleviation, especially in empowering families who are the building fabrics of the society.

## 7. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

The Seventh-day Adventist church in Molo Station has been trying to fight poverty in a number of ways. This include helping the sick, the poor, those who have lost their loved ones, the aged and young men and women who want to pursue their education so that they can overcome poverty in future. They either give cash to meet family costs like burial and funeral expenses and paying for hospital bills. More so, church members in various occasions have assisted the poor members and other people outside the church in meeting their social needs. This includes constructing houses for them, buying clothes and food, tilling of their farms and growing food crops among others. This is in a bid to lift them out of poverty. However, such measures lack long lasting solution to the problem of poverty.

But as found out, the church has not utilized its full potentials hence it has much more to do before it can start to solicit for external help. However, there have been setbacks in fighting poverty which can also be termed as failures on the part of the church. This include lopsided teachings, wrangles in the church, lack of commitment towards poverty alleviation, lack of strategic planning, unpreparedness of church leaders in

economic and social matters and lack of seminars and workshops that educate the church members in matters of poverty alleviation. This shows that the church has still much to do from within to help its members overcome poverty.

This study assessed poverty and the contribution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church towards its alleviation in Molo Station, Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to: ascertain the concept and biblical teaching of poverty, establish the manifestation of poverty, find out the causes and effects of poverty among the Seventh-day Adventists in Molo Station and lastly determine the contribution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church towards poverty alleviation in Molo Station. The study covered the period between the years 1973 to 2014.

The study established that the concept of poverty was to be wide and multidimensional. Generally, poverty was found to be the lack of human needs or wants or deprivation of life necessities like food, clothes, education, money, good health, or power to participate and influence decision making or both. From mental or cultural perspective, it is an as isolation, loss of direction, hopelessness, apathy and passive suffering. In this study, poverty was assessed by looking into some of the aspects that cut across the descriptions given by various authors. This included an individual's income, the ability to acquire and afford basic needs, ability to access major human need services like medical services, food, schools, market, and clean water among others and capacity to participate in decision making. Depending on its magnitude, poverty can be extreme, moderate and relative poverty.

The study established that causes of poverty were numerous and interrelated. They included ethnic violence, which led to destruction of poverty and life, displacement, migration and relocation of people, insecurity and fear of fresh ethnic conflicts. Other causes include poor infrastructure of roads, electricity, inadequate medical facilities and services, lack of schools and unavailability of knowledge from government experts. Factors emanating from the household included high dependency ratio, women and youths marginalization, diseases, deaths, illiteracy, natural cycle and processes, poor resource and environmental management, unemployment and poverty itself. Political isolation had greatly contributed to

marginalization of people in many rural areas in Molo. What the study revealed is that causes of poverty are multidimensional and interrelated and therefore need a holistic approach if at all a lasting solution has to be found.

On the issue of effects of poverty, the study established that poverty had affected the people of Molo in diverse ways. Poverty had led to increased illiteracy, outbreak of diseases and eventual death. Due to poor roads or lack of roads and medical services in the rural areas, coupled with low income in homes, many families had lost their loved ones while watching. Poverty had forced people to encroach forests depleting them completely besides employing poor farming method in the deforested areas. There were also such activities such as careless rubbish and sewage disposal in towns making the environment look pathetic. This had caused environmental degradation. Poverty did not spare the church either. Church projects had taken too long to complete while others had failed to kick off due to poverty while some church members had taken leave from the church due to segregation or lack of capacity to contribute towards church projects. This shows that poverty was impacting on the church negatively hence hindering growth and development.

In alleviating poverty, the Seventh-day Adventist church in Molo Station has been trying in a number of ways. This includes helping the sick, the bereaved families, the aged and young men and women who want to pursue their education so that they can overcome poverty in future. In addition, church members in various occasions have assisted the poor in meeting their social and economic needs like constructing houses for them, buying clothes and food, tilling their farms and growing food crops among others. This is in a bid to help them get out of poverty. However, such measures have short-lived effect and hardly provide a permanent solution to the issue of poverty.

In trying to alleviate poverty, several setbacks have been hindering the church in fighting poverty. These include lack of strategic planning, unpreparedness of church leaders in economic and social matters and lack of economic seminars and workshops that educate the church members on matters of poverty alleviation.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS



The findings of the study point to a number of opportunities that are available through which support to poverty reduction may be provided. This points to a number of recommendations that are presented below together with some of the avenues through which each opportunity could be pursued. They are presented here as a menu of areas of potential: determining which ones are feasible and appropriate for support by various stakeholders and that which can be undertaken as part of the formulation of poverty eradication strategy.

There is need therefore for the church to empower its members to manage the resources within their reach efficiently and effectively. This can be through education, sensitization and motivation to utilize their potentials in managing the resources.

Promotion of education is a citadel in addressing problems of moderate and extreme poverty widespread in Molo. There is need for education stakeholders and church leaders to foresee the provision of education to the people so that they can gain skills to enable them exploit the resources in the region.

Knowledge and information form part of people's asset foundation and the study found out that this is what people of Molo need most.

The study found out that the life and health of people in many families in Molo is in deplorable conditions. To improve the quality of life of the poverty-stricken families, government and private health professions who are in the church have the obligation to provide education on sanitation and general health to the church member before widening the scope to the general community.

There is need for the church leaders and other professionals in the church to teach men and women practical useful work skills by learning some trade and other income generating projects. This will help the people exploit the resources like land.

The government and Church leaders have an urgent call to close the large gap between rich and poor in Molo Station by providing the people with education and funds to enable them initiate projects to improve on their livelihoods.

The study found out that there were families headed by females. However, women did not have equal rights to wealth and property as men. Advancing female education should be an important constituent of poverty reduction policies. Besides, given the importance of female labour in rural Molo and Kenya at large, investing in female education should be given a priority to enhance productivity and food security.

The study established that there was too much reflection on poverty but too little action among the Adventists Christians. This is a legitimate issue of concern. The reflection of the church on poverty should indeed be done in such a way that it leads to action. In the teaching of stewardship, real life situations and realities regarding resource mobilization, utilization and entrepreneurship should be addressed alongside suffering and God's requirement in the return of tithes and offerings.

The study established that poverty was concentrated too on people who depended entirely on agricultural sector for survival. Depending on subsistence agricultural accounted for a good part of the probability of many people being poor in Molo. Thus, investing in the agricultural sector to reduce poverty should be a matter of great priority to all stakeholders in Molo. Moreover, the study found out that the size of land holding is a determinant of poverty manifestation. This suggests that there is importance of improving the quality of land use and also, providing analogous inputs, knowledge and technology that may enhance productivity.

There is need for local leaders, politicians, business entrepreneurs, government and church leaders to sensitize the local people in Molo to venture into other projects like setting up hotels, recreation centers, schools and to supplement their income from agricultural and livestock production. The study further found out that there is little government support in terms of funding and technical support. The government should therefore formulate policies and strategies intended to ensure a society that guarantees equality in access to public services, funds and income-generating activities.

The study also established that community participation in decision making especially in development activities was low. The government should provide policy and budget frameworks that allow the district committees and church committees in local authorities and constituencies

to be fully integrated into decision making. This will foster tickling down of funds and other benefits from the national government to the local communities hence enhance development from grassroots.

There were still prolonged feelings of insecurity and fears about outbreaks of fresh conflict and violence amongst the population of Molo Station as a whole, but particularly amongst those living in the rural settlements. The church should widen its scope for promoting alternative and innovative approaches towards building more sustainable livelihoods in terms of both increased food and income security. The more marginalized in the community; women, youth and disabled people – could form the core target groups for implementing such approaches since there are opportunities in Molo along the same line.

The gospel should be used to deliver people both from economic and spiritual handicap to enable the church members live a better life in this world as they prepare for the one to come. Some of the most innovative and highest quality impact evaluations have been undertaken in Kenya by independent researchers. There is need therefore for the churches in Molo and even the government to facilitate independent researchers' access to information to undertake impact evaluations of poverty. Future researchers need to work in collaboration with the churches if they are to be allowed to apply empirical designs for the evaluations.

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