

CHAPTER FOUR

POVERTY ALLEVIATION: IMPERICAL STUDIES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will review the empirical literature on the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes by civil society organizations in collaboration and partnership with government. In particular, the chapter will explore imperial literature on how poverty alleviation strategies and programmes have alleviated poverty levels worldwide, continentally and nationally. Variables that contribute to the effective implementation of poverty alleviation programmes and policies will be analysed. Specifically various policies, programmes, strategies, practices and models implemented by selected countries will be reviewed. Research findings in general show that community-driven approaches to poverty alleviation and concretized in partnerships between the state and civil society not only are effective, but also enhance the public sector's performance. Secondly, community-driven approaches strengthen the socio-economic structures and institutions of poor communities. It is for this reason that the researcher of the present study strongly believes that the partnership between the state and civil society organizations will contribute in poverty alleviation. Thus, this study specifically seeks to analyse how civil society organizations implement poverty alleviation programmes in partnership with government. In particular, the study will analyse challenges experienced by civil society organizations in implementing poverty alleviation programmes and the extent to which these programmes are empowering and sustainable.

4.2 PROGRESS ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN THE WORLD

A survey of progress made in poverty alleviation from 1990 to date worldwide indicates that the levels of extreme poverty, that is, people living on \$1.00 per day (approximately R8.00), fell from 28% to 21% for the developing countries. But it should be noted that during the same period under review, population in developing countries grew to five billion people, with 1.1 billion being extremely poor. The

latter implies that there is faster population growth, which is not equally matched by economic growth. Sachs (2005) has established that worldwide there are 850 million people who are destitute or poverty stricken. Furthermore, 800 million people die per year worldwide due to lack of food sustenance (Sachs, 2005). With the ever-escalating world food prices, fuel and raw materials it means that more poor people will continue to die. It is, however, sad to note that in 2005 the United States of America spent \$450 billion on purchasing military equipment, compared to \$15 billion spent on addressing the plight of the world's poorest of the poor, whose societies are destabilized by extreme poverty and thereby have become havens of unrest, violence, sickness and even global terrorism (Sachs, 2005:1).

The ever-increasing levels of poverty worldwide seem to be linked to structural policy factors and/or poor or low economic performance and growth. In support of the latter view, Sachs (2005) comments that modern economic growth has also contributed to phenomenal gaps between the richest and the poorest - gaps that were simply impossible when poverty gripped the entire world. Although in countries like China, India and to some extent Bangladesh poverty has been alleviated as a result of the rapid economic growth, many poor people have been left behind. There are still major pockets of poverty, for example across Asia. The persistence of poverty is a moral indictment of the modern times or society.

This chapter therefore reviews levels of poverty worldwide, in the African continent, and in selected countries with a view to establish poverty alleviation approaches that have been effective. Lessons learnt in these approaches will be analyzed with a view to make recommendations to improve the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes in South Africa. The International Labour Organization's Report (2003) contends that poverty is a complex, deep-seated, pervasive reality characterized by exclusion of the poor.

Consequently, poverty is still a worldwide phenomenon. Furthermore, it has been observed that even a greater challenge lies beyond what poverty figures can convey and measure namely: poverty breeds a growing sense of powerlessness,

helplessness, hopelessness, indignity and worthlessness, of being unable to think productively or creatively, plan or dream beyond the daily struggle to survive.

At an individual level, poverty is a nightmare. As to be expected, it is a vicious circle of poor health, reduced working capacity, low productivity and shortened life expectancy. For families poverty is a trap. It leads to inadequate schooling, low skills, insecure income, early parenthood, ill-health and a possible early death. Spicker, Leguizamon and Gordon (2006:160) use the term "poverty trap" to denote a geographical area in which poverty has become concentrated. The Sachs report (2005) uses the term "poverty trap" to refer to factors keeping developing countries in poverty. This is described as a vicious cycle where poverty leads to low savings and investment; low savings and investment imply poor economic growth; and poor economic growth deepens poverty. It should be emphasized that the ultimate aim of economic growth must be the betterment of the living conditions of the poor. Economic growth that does not lead to sharp and sustained alleviations in poverty may create more problems than it solves. Similarly, if rapid growth is achieved at the expense of a worsening in the distribution of resources, it ultimately becomes unsustainable since it engenders social tensions (Cornia 2004:297). Sachs broadens the list of self-reinforcing problems to include low tax revenues, low foreign investment, violent conflict, the "brain drain", rapid population growth, environmental degradation, and low innovation. For societies, poverty is a curse. It fuels instability, crime, violence and immobilizes poor countries from progressing on the path to sustainable development and poverty alleviation. With worldwide escalation competition for limited or scarce resources, e.g. fuel, food, money, machinery and equipments hardships will become the order of the day.

It is against this worrying worldwide poverty scenario that the researcher of the present study proposes a paradigm shift as far as the implementation of programmes, strategies and models for poverty alleviation are concerned. Thus, the hypothesis for this study states that:

"Poverty alleviation programmes implemented by civil society organizations in collaboration and partnership with government are

empowering and sustainable”. Hence, the researcher’s strong belief that the participation of civil society organizations in the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes is critical in securing greater sustainability in development and poverty alleviation. Partnership between the state and civil society organizations will go a long way in enabling the poor to influence public policy. Participation of the civil society organizations in the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes is critical in ensuring that the poor are empowered and that those who are intended to benefit from interventions to fight poverty are active participants and have a voice in the process.

The preliminary results of the literature review on the implementation of poverty alleviation policies and programmes suggest that traditionally world government’s approach was mainly the distribution of food, clothing, medication items, and in some cases educational aid. It was a top-down approach with the lack of consultation about the needs of those countries that were receiving aid. Approaches used were not always empowering, particularly the project approach, which was not based on evidence but was fund-driven. Most of these projects were not able to sustain themselves and were largely dependent on government funding. As soon as funds planned for the project were depleted, the project immediately collapsed. Aided countries were not involved in the design and implementation of poverty alleviation projects. It is important, therefore, to acknowledge that common approaches of throwing money at poverty alleviation have done very little to correct injustices that condition the lives of the poor. These approaches have rather perpetuated poverty in many developing countries. Progressive developing countries, however, indicate greater involvement of the poor themselves including civil society organizations within these poor communities in poverty alleviation strategies. Such strategies put emphasis on community-driven development approaches. These countries use bottom-up policy implementation approaches. Community-driven development is an approach to development that has been used quite widely by the World Bank. The approach is premised on placing the community at the heart of the development process. The main principles of community-driven development are:

- placing control and resources in the hands of the community;
- viewing poor people themselves as assets and partners in development; and
- Building on existing institutions.

Progressive developing countries therefore spend large sums of money developing business and markets, infrastructure, and invest in education and development programmes. Thus they support their social and economic development policies with concrete practical poverty alleviation programmes that have great ownership of communities and are responsive to the needs of the community.

It has been observed that the United Nations' development group has adopted a dynamic participative approach that seeks to align its planning mechanisms with the poverty alleviation strategies set by developing countries. This new approach is based on the partnership and participative practice in which governments consult regularly and widely with business, trade unions, civil society organizations and local authorities in developing poverty alleviation programmes. The direct result of such a participative development strategy is the high commitment by the poor to ensure its success. The poor experience a deep sense of ownership and meaningful involvement with the poverty alleviation programme (ILO Report, 2003).

A similar participative poverty alleviation programme has been initiated by the World Bank. It encourages international agencies and donor countries worldwide, to change the traditional 'welfare' or food, clothing and education-aid distribution approach, to a more facilitative or developmental strategy. The latter strategy is more empowering, sustainable and effective since it allows the poor developing countries to assume the responsibility for policy design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the impact of public policy.

Research indicates that poverty affects women most. It is for this reason that since 1995 the United Nations community has progressively and increasingly re-aligned its development approach to focus on poverty alleviation, paying particular attention to the feminization of the poverty dilemma. According to UNICEF (2005:4) the world is

falling short in its promise and commitment to ensure that every child enjoys a safe and nurturing childhood. Over half of the children in the developing world live in poverty. Children are deprived of access to the most basic goods or services and as such one in six children is underweight or suffering from stunting; one in seven children has no health care at all; one in five has no safe water and one in three has no toilet or sanitation facilities at home. Over 640 million children live in dwellings with mud floors or extreme overcrowding; and over 300 million children have no television, radio, telephone or newspaper. Over 120 million children are shut out of primary schools, the majority of them girls. More than 30 000 children die of preventable causes worldwide every day. Child poverty is therefore affecting the lives of millions of children worldwide. It is a problem present in both poor and rich countries. In essence, children living in poverty become adults living in poverty (UNICEF, 2005).

During the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000, the world governments of the United Nations, through their political leaders, committed the community of nations to a collaborative, concerted, coordinated relentless drive to reduce and eventually eliminate extreme poverty by 2015. The latter gave birth to the popular eight chapters of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which constitute common evaluation benchmarks globally. It should be noted that all 189 member states of the United Nations signed the declaration, which was history in its kind. The declaration committed its signatories to promote a series of goals for poverty alleviation to be achieved by 2015 (UN Millennium Declaration 2000). These Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are time-bound, quantified targets for addressing the many dimensions of extreme poverty (such as income, shelter, health and education) while promoting gender equality and environmental sustainability. Similarly, worldwide, the structures of civil society are expected and/or directed to operate their service delivery to poor communities and families along the priorities of the MDGs (see ILO, 2003; World Development Report, 2003; World Development Report, 2008; Civil Society-Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, 2007:1-4; Sachs, 2005; Prahalad, 2006).

Prahalad (2006) argues vehemently in support of an inclusive business strategy for empowerment of the poor as follows:

"...The world's most exciting, fastest-growing new market is located where you least expect it, namely at the bottom of the pyramid. Collectively, the world's billions of poor people have immense entrepreneurial capabilities and buying power. You can learn how to serve them and help millions of the world's poorest people escape poverty" (preface page).

The latter view strongly suggests that to help the poor people and communities, development agencies need to apply a turnaround strategy reflected by the MDGs. This strategy must add value economically and financially in the process of empowering and developing poor countries or societies. Given the broad spectrum of civil society organizations, any poverty alleviation programme enjoying such pervasive and inclusive input/effort is bound to be effective and successful by any measure.

4.3 PROGRESS MADE ON MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (2000 TO 2008)

As already stated, the adoption and recognition of MDGs by the United Nations community in 2000 represent a turning point for the whole world to alleviate poverty based on a uniform operational strategy. In 2005, which marked the first five years after the signing of the MDGs Declaration, government leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the goals. Research, however, indicates that there has been limited progress towards achieving MDGs despite the fact that one third of the journey to 2015 had been travelled by world governments. The Millennium Development Report (2005) provides overall figures of progress worldwide, such as the average income increase by about 21%, a declined number of people living in extreme poverty, declined child mortality rates and a rise in the average life expectancy from 63 to 65 years (United Nations Millennium Project 2005:8). This progress is not uniform across the world. Sub-Saharan Africa in particular is experiencing the brunt of the development crisis with food insecurity, a rising HIV prevalence rate, rising numbers of people living in abject poverty, a rising child mortality rate and a decline in life expectancy (Schoeman and Van Rooyen, 2006:281).

The report identifies a number of reasons for the underperformance in achieving the MDGs. One of the reasons that delays development is the failure of governance - when governments do not uphold the rule of law, manage sound public administration, respect human rights and follow good economic policy (The Millennium Development Report 2005:22).

The Millennium Development Goals Report of 2007 however indicates that there has been some improvement in poverty alleviation since 2005. The number of extremely poor people in Sub-Saharan Africa has levelled off, and the poverty rate has declined by nearly six percentage points since 2000. However, in spite of some improvement, the poverty gap ratio in Sub-Saharan Africa remains the highest in the world, indicating that the poor in this region are the most economically disadvantaged in the world. The report stresses that the region is not on track to reach the goal of reducing poverty by half by 2015. More generally, the lack of employment opportunities for young people, gender inequalities, rapid and unplanned urbanization, deforestation, increasing water scarcity, and high HIV prevalence are pervasive obstacles (2007:5)

General observations show that population growth is faster than economic growth. It seems that even in those cases where economic growth has been recorded, it has not translated to benefits to the poor as indicated earlier on. The ultimate aim of economic growth must be the betterment of the living conditions of the poor. Economic growth that does not lead to sharp and sustained reductions in poverty may create more problems than it solves (Cornia, 2004:297). Furthermore, owing to decreased levels of investment by First World countries, employment opportunities have been compromised on a large scale in the developing countries. Preliminary literature survey findings, about progress made on poverty alleviation, indicate that most of the First World countries have alleviated poverty. A substantial number of developing countries have also made remarkable progress towards meeting the 2015 target of halving poverty levels. East Asia, for example, and Pacific countries, which represent a total population of 1.9 billion people, has achieved rapid economic

growth and high levels of human capital development. This region is comprised of ten countries including China. It is the fastest-growing region socio-economically among the developing countries in the world. Over 200 million people have climbed out of extreme poverty since 1990 to 2008. The proportion of people living under \$1 a day has decreased by half - from 30% to 15%. The formula used to achieve these phenomenal results was extensive participation of civil society organizations and the implementation of progressive public policies. In particular, education and an intensive campaign of skills development among the poor proved to be the panacea for poverty alleviation.

4.3.1 South Asia

South Asia is a paradoxical constituency that has talent, creativity, and leadership located in the midst of acute poverty and inequality (UNFPA, 2003:81). The whole of Asia as a region has had a higher and steadier economic growth rate than other continents. Progress made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals by South Asia countries, with a total population of 1.4 billion, has been uneven. South Asia generates an income per capita of \$590 a year, but it still has high levels of poverty. For example, more than 40% of the world's extremely poor are found in this region. The region's economic growth has averaged more than 5% annual growth, which has contributed to a decrease of 10%, - , that is from 41% to 31% - a net reduction of 31 million people. Furthermore, child mortality rates in South Asia have decreased sharply from 130 per thousand births in 1990 to 92 per thousand births in 2003 in Bangladesh. Education and expansion of employment opportunities have been used consistently to fight poverty. Some of the most successful model projects, where the poor have pulled themselves out of poverty, have been led by women in South Asia, including the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh and the Self-Employed Women's Association in India. It is important to note that these programmes have been implemented by communities including civil society organizations using bottom-up approach to policy implementation. This approach has encouraged ownership by communities themselves and the state's role has been that of facilitator.

Challenges still remain in the areas of child malnutrition, primary and secondary school completion rates, maternal mortality and gender balance in education and health. Almost half of all children under five years old are malnourished and youth illiteracy is still high at 23% for males and 38% for females. Tuberculosis and HIV and Aids are the most serious health threats in South Asia (United Nations: Millennium Development Goals: 2005).

4.3.2 Europe and Central Asia

This region represents 27 countries with a total population of 472 million. It has moved from command to mixed economies in order to reduce its elevated poverty levels. Recently, there has been a major turnaround in economic growth. However, the \$1 a day universal measure is at 5%, which is reasonably lower compared to other poverty-stricken countries. As is the case in South Asia, the health MDG faces its greatest challenge in the escalating incidence of HIV and Aids and tuberculosis cases. There is still a big need for health education to combat HIV and Aids, since most of the people are in denial, stigma and indifferent to enlightenment about health-related issues (ILO: 2005; World Bank: 2005).

4.3.3 Middle East and North Africa

The Middle East and North Africa have a rapid or fast population growth rate. It is the second fastest rate in the world after Sub-Saharan Africa. As observed early in other poor countries of the world, high or fast population growth with low productivity and economic growth result in high levels of poverty. Hence, since 1990, the proportion of people living below \$1 a day has remained the same, while the % age of people living below \$2 a day rose from 21% to 23%, an increase from 51 to 70 million people.

Comparatively the region has a reasonable or well-developed infrastructure of services, but lacks a sustainable water management facility. It remains a serious challenge for the region. This region is still struggling to develop a comprehensive education system that will be more relevant to current economic activities.

The Middle East and North Africa's unprecedented challenge is low employment opportunities against an ever-rising labour-force, currently totalling 112 million, which is expected to rise to 146 million in 2010, and 185 million in 2020. Thus, millions of new job seekers are flooding the labour market and some of these are young, educated citizens. About 63% of university enrolment is female students. There seems to be no well-planned strategy or programme of poverty alleviation similar to East Asia.

4.3.4 Africa

Africa is a continent plagued with underdevelopment and poverty, notably outside the cities. Villages exhibit many marks of neglect, even exploitation. More than two thirds of African countries are classified in the low-income of Gross National Income of \$825 or less. In addition to the latter scenario, more than 400 million people have no access to clean water and electricity in their homes. Furthermore, over 300 million people live on less than the universally accepted daily income of \$1 a day, with more than 150 million living in informal settlement housing structures (see World Bank Reports: 2005, 2006, 2007; World Bank Millennium Chart, 2005; Prahalad, 2006; World Development Reports, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2008).

Despite conservative growth in economic performance in the past five years, Africa still lags behind in the alleviation of poverty levels. This is possibly due to accelerated population growth, which is a generally observed phenomenon throughout the African continent. Health remains a huge challenge evidenced by a decline in life expectancy across the Sub-Saharan region - from 50 years in 1990 to 46 years in 2003. Planned campaigns to create healthy lifestyles and raise awareness have been unsuccessful due to severe shortages of qualified health workers. Furthermore, diseases of lifestyle, for example HIV and Aids, tuberculosis, diabetes, cholera, malaria, malnutrition and others are on the increase. HIV/AIDS is potentially one of the most serious threats to sustainable development in Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa is especially hard hit with approximately 25, 4 million people living with HIV, which represent 60% of all HIV positive people worldwide (UNAIDS, 2005, Fact Sheet). HIV and Aids-related health problems claim the lives of more

than two million Africans per year. Irrespective of which tool or method is used to measure success of poverty alleviation programmes in Africa, all results indicate very little progress made in the past 16 years. The environment in which public administration functions in sub-Saharan African countries is affected by internal problems and challenges such as national debt, corruption in governments, human rights violations, poverty, conflict, HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, and famine (Schoeman and van Rooyen, 2006:291). Ijeoma (2009:585) contends that Sub-Saharan Africa are known as countries which suffer from public governing problems: low decentralization, corruption, weak public administration, low accountability and transparency, unfair elections, poor delivery of public services and lack of real freedom of press and mass media. It is clear that unless governments address these challenges, the African continent's poverty-related problems will not decrease

Comparatively, Africa rates very low in terms of infrastructure, good governance, accountable leadership, democratization levels, and income and prosperity levels when compared to other developing and developed countries. This notwithstanding, Africa is home to large supplies of minerals, for example, South Africa alone supplies in excess of 75% of the world's mineral demands. Yet it has high levels of poverty and unemployment.

Hence the researcher of this study seeks to find answers to the question: "Why South Africa in particular, after 16 years of democratic rule and progressive social development policies aimed at poverty alleviation and addressing underdevelopment, is still in the severest grip of poverty? Could this be attributed to the challenges in the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes? What has been the role of civil society organizations in the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes? **"To what extent has government's collaboration and partnership with the civil society organizations in the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes ensured empowerment and sustainability?"**

Perhaps a general or common observation of the majority of countries in Africa is that there is accelerated population growth, but slow and little economic growth.

The latter seems to be the main reason for high levels of poor socio-economic environments in Africa. In addition, Africa has high levels of unemployment, civil conflicts, crime, low incomes, low literacy rates, low democratization practices, in some cases despotic rule, poor infrastructure - especially roads, telecommunication systems, electricity networks, factories, etc. The latter negative factors all combine and arrest the development pace of Africa. The MDG Report of 2008 contends that unless additional strengthened or corrective action is taken the proportion of people in Sub-saharan Africa living on less than \$1 per day is unlikely to be reduced by the target of one half (2008:3). These factors also create a serious psychological dependency syndrome on external assistance expectation.

4.4 POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN SELECTED COUNTRIES

A short list of selected countries will be sampled with a view to understand their poverty alleviation programmes and factors that have contributed to their success or failures. More emphasis will be placed on the following: to what extent does the poverty alleviation programme or strategy encourage partnership between government and civil society organizations? What were the effects of the programmes in alleviating poverty?

4.4.1 Poverty alleviation in China

According to Sachs (2005), China has been recorded as the country that has achieved highest levels of poverty alleviation. The proportion of poor people decreased from 33% to 18% of the population. Sachs (2005) refers to the economic position of China during its revolution of 1949 as the most devastated economy and poorest country in the world, with a virtually collapsed socio-economic infrastructure. But through harnessing socially and economically-inclusive development and poverty alleviation programmes, which were participative, sustainable, focusing on partnership with communities and villages, it succeeded in creating a marvellous economic boom. Since 1978 to date, China has empowered more than 400 million of its previously poor citizens. China has further recognized the important role for civil society to play in addressing the issues of poverty alleviation, population, reproductive health and gender. Over the last ten years, for

example, more than 200 000 rural impoverished households have received technical and financial assistance from the “Happiness Project”, which is aimed at particularly mothers in poverty rural areas of the western region, and these households have benefited from the initiation of income-generating activities to eradicate poverty (UNFPA, 2003:76). The successes in China were therefore made possible by major socio-economic policies, public administration policies, development and infrastructure improvement and expansion and, most importantly, the role played by civil society. Lifespan expectancy has increased from forty-one years during the revolution to the modern figure of sixty-five years. Thus, China has been the most successful growing economy, growing at an average per capita rate of almost 8 % per year. The average income per person has doubled every nine years, posting a remarkably higher standard of living for citizens. The success of China can also be attributed to a paradigm shift, that is, decentralization approach. The UNFPA (2003:77) contends that in the transformation towards a market-driven economy and the streamlining of the government structure, there is a high probability that civil society will play an increasingly pivotal role in addressing issues on population, reproductive health, and gender and poverty alleviation in China.

4.4.2 Poverty alleviation in Vietnam

Vietnam has also achieved reasonable poverty alleviation. An example of some of the approaches implemented, which contributed to poverty alleviation, include Ha Tinh Rural Development Project (HRDP), which helped many households in Ha Tinh province to escape from poverty, but which also generated a number of innovative poverty alleviation approaches that have been widely replicated by the government and donors in other provinces. For example, the project successfully introduced the new approach of community self-implementation of infrastructure schemes. Another impressive model of community empowerment demonstrated by the HRDP is the development of community-based organizations (CBOs). Water use associations, introduced by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in Tuyen Quang Province and replicated under HRDP, have also been institutionalized by the Government’s National Strategic Framework for Participatory Irrigation Management in 2004 UNDP (2008:162). The project contributed significantly to enhancing the

participatory management capacity at the community level through capacity building of community development boards (CDBs) elected by the community, with representatives from the villages and mass organizations to oversee implementation of the community development plans. The project also developed various CBOs, such as water users' associations, market management boards and school management committees established to manage the operations and maintenance of the specific schemes.

Similarly, the transition economies of Eastern Europe and Central Asia have also made remarkable progress in poverty alleviation, using inclusive community development strategies.

There are many factors that contribute to the mixed results on poverty alleviation worldwide, for example social, political, exclusive policies, high unemployment, lack of access to basic education, poor health states – HIV and Aids, lack of enforcement of legal rights, and/or limited or no involvement of civil society organizations in the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes. In support of the latter assertions, Sachs (2005) lists the following economic factors that undermine or act as obstacles to poverty alleviation: high unemployment, heavy external debt, trade system barriers, and high levels of income inequality and commodity dependency. Lack of coherence between national and international policies and an inadequate international enabling environment that works to the disadvantage of developing countries exacerbate the poverty dilemma.

The researcher of this study proposes participatory strategies and programmes driven by the poor themselves as a way of alleviating poverty. Thus, for long-term, sustainable poverty alleviation programmes, the involvement and participation of civil society organizations is absolutely essential in ensuring that the implementation is driven by the poor themselves as a way of taking ownership for the improvements in their lives. The latter must be based on and guided by an inclusive well-planned, broad-based and coordinated strategy.

4.4.3 Poverty alleviation Programmes in Selected Countries in Africa

Historically, Africa has been subjected to unprecedented levels and intensities by Western imperialistic or colonial governments for decades. During this period of colonial rule, the African public administration was characterized by compliance to rules and regulations without focusing on the needs of the people. Structures were hierarchical, prohibiting lower-level participation, particularly at community level. The culture was suppressive with no development. Primarily the motives and interests of colonial governments were to extract the minerals and other raw materials, ship them abroad, and resell them as finished products in Africa again. The latter approach opened a huge market for the world's imperialists, without any deep-seated motive or intention to develop the indigenous population of Africa. For this practice, the imperial Western governments - Britain, Germany, France, Portugal, Spain, etc were rightly called "the rape of Africa" by some liberal historians. This laid the foundations for the impoverishment of the African continent, and the flourishing slave trade.

As a way of soothing their probably tortured conscience, they adopted policies that pumped a lot of food, clothing and education materials back into Africa. To a large extent, even during the 21st century, the practice of rich First World countries is to donate some large sums of money to poverty-stricken Third World countries, and also food parcels. Consequently, the high reliance on welfare-model practice by Western rich governments has not succeeded in alleviating levels of poverty, illiteracy, poor health, nor assisted in increasing economic growth, productivity levels and prosperity levels.

African countries are searching for better ways to deal with the economic crisis they are facing. As they continue to find better ways to deal with this crisis, there is growing concern whether their public administration systems have the potential to contribute to recovery and development. A review of public administration systems in most African countries reveals that they are as much in crisis as the economic crises they are trying to rectify. The preliminary results of poverty alleviation policies, programmes and strategies implemented in these African countries also indicate that

they were neither developmental nor participative in enabling involvement of civil society organizations in the implementation process. Visibly, they were palliative and welfare-focused. There was very little influence of public policy by the poor. As such policies were not responsive to the needs of the poor. There was very little empowerment of the poor with development programmes driven by donor agenda or the state. Seemingly, this finding explains why poverty levels are still on the increase despite liberal foreign aid donations by First World countries.

The attainment of independence ushered in great development expectations as well as new and increased responsibilities. Except for Morocco, Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia, Sudan and Ghana, the rest of African countries have only been independent for less than twenty years. This very short time has been a time of tremendous, rapid and often traumatic changes. These countries have experienced a change from an inward-looking approach to an outward-looking approach. Emphasis has been on responsiveness to the needs of the people as opposed to a rule-bound approach. If Africa has to reach the MDGs goal of halving poverty by 2015, new poverty alleviation policies, programmes, strategies and models that are holistic, inclusive, empowering, sustainable and driven by the poor should be considered.

4.4.3.1 Ghana's Poverty alleviation Programme

The International Poverty Centre and World Development Reports (2005, 2006 and 2002, 2003, 2005 respectively) indicate that poverty levels in Ghana are at a moderate level compared to extremely poor economies like Ethiopia, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, etc.

The success of Ghana in implementing poverty alleviation programmes could be attributed to the approach they took in developing policy options to address poverty. Community consultations that were made clearly indicated that poverty, particularly in the rural areas required actions that were directly focussed on the fundamental causes of poverty and the inequitable distribution of the benefits of society. There was therefore priority action to redress the exclusion of the poor, particularly those in the rural environment. Clear guidelines were developed with a focus in decision-

making and the application of participatory planning at all levels. The Participatory Poverty Analysis conducted clearly showed that local communities had an important part to play in development decision-making and had a commonsensical approach (GPRS, February 19, 2003)

In Ghana 52% of the labour force, aged between 15 and 64 years, is self-employed in agriculture, 37.4% works in the non-agricultural informal economy and 13.7% works in the formal sector or private employment. Despite the reasonable record of per capita growth in current years, Ghana's economy has failed to provide new and better employment opportunities and also to fully utilize the total country labour force. Poverty levels comparatively with other developing countries have not declined or improved reasonably. The majority of employment opportunities continue to comprise of low-income agricultural and informal activities. Recently, formal and private sector jobs declined, resulting in persistent, unemployment, underemployment, and low growth, which fuelled structural and low income poverty (International Poverty Centre Report, no 2, 2006, ILO, 2003, 2005). Consequently, the persistence of informal and precarious, low-pay jobs has compromised Ghana's economy to translate economic growth into broad-based poverty alleviation (see Oduro and Osei-Akoto, 2008; Powell and Geoghegan, 2006, Barr, 2005; Binns, Porter, Nel and Kyei, 2005; Agostino, 2005).

As stated earlier, Ghana's economic and poverty pattern are comparatively progressive, but there are still areas that can be described as pockets of poverty, characterized by extreme infrastructural deprivation, such as Tabe Ere and others. Currently, Ghana's economy is market-driven, and with promising activities managed by civil society structures. Across Ghana poor households use a wide diversity of livelihoods and coping strategies such as selling their cows in times of need, gathering and selling wood, supplying sand gravel to masons, making and selling kitchen fans, etc.

Special partnership programmes with civil society and private sector organizations were developed by mid 2003. These focussed on areas where non-governmental

and private sector organizations had historically been lead players for example, early childhood development, alternative education and vocational and technical training. Government stimulated direct service provision by the traditional providers, namely, non-governmental and private organizations through strengthening its own role in policy development, training of caregivers, regulation and co-funding through existing social investment projects. Like most poverty-stricken African countries, Ghana is experiencing sporadic poverty alleviation that needs to be more accelerated and increased, given sufficient funding and developmental direction by the government and the First World donors of development aid (The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2002, World Bank Report, 2002; ILO's Reports 2003, 2005, 2007).

4.4.3.2 Nigeria's Poverty-Alleviation Programme and its Effectiveness

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country with over 132 million people. Since its independence in 1960, Nigeria has been subjected to decades of political turmoil and intense violence at times, which were related to civil war and successive military coups. Furthermore, Nigeria experienced frequent ethnic and religious rifts and disputes. In February 1999, former military ruler Olusegun Obasanjo won the first presidential election in more than fifteen years of a military government rule that had deep roots of corrupt, repressive and undemocratic leadership.

Nigeria, like Angola, has vast oil reserves and a reasonably well-developed infrastructure, but prolonged years of economic mismanagement, macro-economic instability and widespread corruption have arrested the country's socio-economic development prospects and fuelled sharp rises in poverty levels countrywide (see The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2002; Lufumpa, 2005; ILO's Reports, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006).

Although the Obasanjo-led government tried hard to introduce and implement reforms at an accelerated pace, the damage incurred from the previous corrupt public administration was too deep to be reversed in a short period of time. Consequently, poverty levels increased steadily over the years. For example, the

results of Nigeria's last poverty measurement in 1980 indicated a poverty rate of 27.2%, which translates to 18 million people classified as poor.

The poverty rate rose sharply again in a 1996 survey. It indicated that 67 million people were poor, with 30 million of these people being extremely poor with no food sustenance. About 35% of the Nigerian population is classified as the poor of the poorest, jobless, surviving on alms, and some are homeless. Poor governance, characterized by corruption and low economic performance, and inadequate involvement of civil society organizations seem to be common explanation for high levels of poverty in an oil-rich country (The World Bank, 2002; Adekola and Olajide, 2005).

A general overview of the existing poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria shows that the government has introduced a wide variety of such programmes, with varying measures of success. Evidence shows that various economic empowerment programmes have been adopted to improve the socio-economic conditions of the people. Despite these programmes, poverty still exists mainly among Nigerian youth, especially in the urban communities.

Research indicates that the Nigerian government has established more than seventeen poverty alleviation institutions between 1986 and 2004. Such poverty alleviation programmes consisted of structural adjustment programmes, River Basin Authorities, Urban Mass Transit Scheme, Low Cost Housing, People's Bank, Community Bank, National Directorate of Employment, Family Support Programme, Family Economic Advancement Programme, National Poverty Alleviation Programme, Youth Empowerment Scheme and, most recently, National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies. Seemingly, government in Nigeria during the period 1999-2007 was highly committed to the socio-economic upliftment of its people. For example, Obasanjo's economic direction's pledge stated that: *"...the pursuit of poverty alleviation shall be a first priority and shall be adopted as a means and an end for the achievement of accelerated economic growth and the eventual elimination of poverty generally"* (Adekola and Olajide, 2006:124)".

To realize the goals of the latter pledge, the Nigerian government released N10 billion for use towards poverty alleviation. The government further created over 200 000 jobs in the 2000 fiscal year, with provision for an increase in the subsequent years. Provision was made for expanded training and the settlement of at least 50% of tertiary institution graduates, estimated at 130 000 per annum. While these programmes looked very impressive, it is important to note that poverty levels in Nigeria are still very high. The effects of debts from the IMF and the World Bank have a serious impact on the economy of Nigeria. Poverty alleviation is driven mostly by the government through policies and market-driven economic practices with less participation of community structures and institutions. The literature review indicates that more participative involvement of community structures in poverty alleviation are effective as in the case of China, India and Vietnam.

4.5 EMPOWERMENT AS A VARIABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Many researchers in the field of development believe strongly that the adoption of appropriate approaches that focus on the empowerment of communities lead to greater success (see Narayan, 2002; ANC – RDP, 2008; Barr, 2005; Bhorat, and Cassim, 2004; Callaham, 2007; Du Toit, 2005; Kroukamp, 2006; Nissanke & Thorbecke, 2008; Lufumpa, 2005; Prem- World Bank, 2002; De Janvry & Sadoulet, 1995; Africa, 2004).

The challenge faced by a researcher in this field is to identify key elements or strategies of empowerment that recur frequently, consistently across socio-economic and institutional context. The empirical review indicates that there are thousands of poverty-alleviation empowerment approaches that have been initiated by governments and poor people themselves, civil society, and the private sectors. However, it seems that these approaches have not been based on deliberate choice planning, participation and involvement of civil society organizations, hence the need to implement such approaches in alleviating poverty in South Africa.

According to Narayan (2002), successful inputs to empower poor people and their communities are based on four main key elements, namely: access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability, and local organizational capacity. These key elements will be discussed below:

4.5.1 Access to information

Researchers in the field of poverty alleviation worldwide support strategies that encourage access to useful information by the poor (see World Development Reports, 2000, 2001, 2003, ILO Reports, 2003, 2005; Sachs, 2005; Narayan, 2002; Prahalad, 2006). Similar trends are followed by South African development and poverty researchers and practitioners (see Du Toit, 2005; Lufumpa, 2005; ANC-RDP, 2008; Meth & Dias, 2004). Essentially, the partnership of civil society organizations and government seeks to create a two-way information flow from government to citizens and from citizens to governments in terms of socio-economic education, new business opportunities, financial resources, training, and development ventures. Hopefully, informed citizens are empowered citizens who can take advantage of developmental opportunities, access services, negotiate business opportunities, exercise their rights and hold government and civil society organizations leaders accountable for progress or lack of progress (Narayan, 2002; Van der Molen, Van Rooyen and Van Dyk, 2001).

Consequently, without relevant information that is timely and presented in a meaningful way, it becomes difficult for the poor to be empowered to the extent that they are able to access opportunities that will have sustainable positive impact on their socio-economic conditions. It is for this reason, therefore, that the researcher of this study seeks to analyse the extent to which civil society organizations have participated in poverty alleviation and particularly information dissemination by leaders of civil society organizations as a way of empowering.

4.5.2 Inclusion and Participation

South Africa is one of the four countries in Africa that are classified in the upper income earning as indicated earlier. Despite this favourable rating, South Africa has

a long history of social exclusion and social stratification of its people during the apartheid regime. Consequently, it has skewed demographic patterns currently estimated as follows: 2% affluent or rich citizens, 10% middle class citizens, the well-earning group, and a marginalized 88% lower social strata, who eke out an existence.

According to Narayan (2002), the poor can benefit and be empowered effectively, provided that they participate and are part of every level of democratic and developmental government's activities, including development and implementation of policy, legislation and strategies aimed at empowering the poor themselves. Korten & Klaus, 1984, cited in Liebenberg and Steward, (1997:38), state that participation is both a means and an end in the process of development. Participation is also a social learning process through which participants in the development process learn to be effective, learn to be efficient, and learn to expand. This can be illustrated in this figure (Lienberg & Steward, 1997:38):

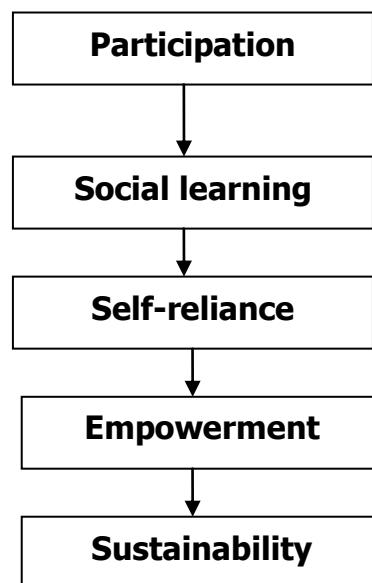


Figure 1: Participation process and its outcomes (Re-configured 2010)

To achieve participation, there is a need for a paradigm shift, that is, a completely non-bureaucratic and decentralized government decision-making approach. In support of the latter view, Narayan (2002:19-20) maintains that "... sustaining poor people's participation in societies with deeply entrenched norms of exclusion or in

multi-ethnic societies with a history of conflict is a complex process that requires new institutional mechanisms, resources, facilitation, sustained vigilance and experimentation". These observations are very relevant and valid for the South African society, with its long history of racial discrimination, conflicts, exclusion of the poor, particularly blacks, and great disparity in income levels and employment opportunities. Under such demanding and unfavourable social conditions, most governments or agencies revert to centralized decision-making and holding prolonged endless public meetings without any impact on implementation of poverty alleviation policies and programmes. Thus, participation then becomes yet another costly practice imposed on civil society organizations and the poor people without any positive outcomes or progress.

Research indicates that the inclusion of poor people and other traditionally excluded groups could be problematic and complex in terms of setting priorities, facilitating change and building capacity as a way of facilitating commitment to transformation and change. Group participation situations and decision-making are often accompanied by frequent disagreement, conflict and resistance to change. Evidently, there is a need to provide conflict resolution mechanisms, experiential learning and basic communication to manage disagreements and perceptions.

There is also the problem of choice of suitable participation mechanisms by the poor. Narayan (2002) indicates that participation can be in a wide variety of forms, for example direct participation, representational participation by selecting representatives from membership-based groups and associations, political through elected representatives, information-based participation, with data aggregated and reported directly or through intermediaries to local and national decision-makers, and, lastly, competitive market-based participation mechanisms, for example, by removing restrictions and other barriers, increasing choice about what people can grow or to whom they can sell or by payment for services selected and received.

Based on the literature reviewed, it is clear that South Africa's challenge to poverty alleviation is the apparent exclusion of the poor in many projects, processes and

practices designed to empower them. Government has spent billions of rand on a number of poverty-relief projects targeting the poor and the marginalized and implemented by civil society and communities themselves. However, there is little evidence of the impact of these poverty alleviation programmes, particularly the effect of participation and involvement of civil society organization in poverty alleviation programmes. More in-depth research needs to be conducted to evaluate and analyze how civil society organizations involved in development and poverty alleviation since 1997 are delivering vitally needed services to the jobless and poor citizens.

Accountability

Success in poverty alleviation depends to a great extent on how responsible, committed and accountable both government and civil society organizations leaders are. Narayan (2002) explains the concept of accountability as referring to the ability to call public officials, private employers or service providers to account, requiring that they be answerable for their policies, actions and use of funds designated for poverty alleviation or development of the poor people. Unfortunately, the African continent, including South Africa, is characterized by corruption, involving government officials in many departments and abuse of office for private gain. The latter is a chronic problem and practice that cripples the poor people most and possibly leads to ever-escalating levels of poverty or, as commonly expressed, "...the rich get richer, while the poor get poorer".

Three main types of accountability mechanisms are proposed by Narayan (2002), namely political, administrative and public. In most cases, political accountability of political parties and representations is executed through elections. Administrative accountability of government agencies is carried out in internal accountability audits or mechanisms both horizontal and vertical within and between agencies, while public or social accountability mechanisms hold government agencies accountable to citizens. Social accountability can reinforce political and administrative accountability mechanisms.

Seemingly, a wide range of tools exists to drive greater accounting towards citizens' public actions and results. In general, access to information by citizens builds more pressure for an improved rate of service delivery, governance, transparency and accountability, such as setting priorities for national expenditure, providing access to quality houses, schools, hospitals, shopping centres, roads, clinics, job creation opportunities, medicines supplies, security and safety services, etc.

The poor also need access to legal protection, justice and quality education to improve their lifestyles. The latter can be speedily achieved through an active and healthy partnership between civil society organizations and government efforts at community and family interactions and service delivery levels. In South Africa, the local government's integrated planning and development strategy can ensure maximum citizens' participation in poverty alleviation. However, at present there is no satisfactory feedback on the effectiveness of civil society's role in poverty alleviation. Perhaps limited capacity, leadership and management practices could be provisionally advanced as reasons for lack of progress in poverty alleviation over the years.

Local Organizational Capacity

Across the world, local organizational capacity is recognized and accepted as key for development effectiveness and empowerment of the poor. Practitioners in the field of human empowerment explain local organizational capacity as the ability of people to work together, organize themselves and mobilize resources to solve problems of common interest. For example, the poor and the jobless reach out to each other to co-operate to work jointly, outside formal systems, to solve common survival problems (Narayan, 2002; Sachs, 2005; Binns et al.).

Many informal organizations in South Africa are working collaboratively to alleviate poverty or to render financial support, for example, stokvels, megodiso (savings schemes), women societies, bank-sponsored societies; food parcels distribution clubs, etc. These organizations are, however, poorly co-ordinated and do not necessarily focus on the creation of employment opportunities as a strategy for

poverty alleviation. Several studies have made the fundamental point that sustained poverty alleviation can be achieved only by a process that creates productive employment. Zepeda, Alarcon, Soares and Osorio (2007:6) warn that it is not the case, however, that employment creation in any form leads to a rapid and sustained alleviation of poverty. The character of job creation and productivity enhancement needs to give the poor access to economic opportunities. Zepeda et al. (2007:6), citing the work of Khan (2001) and Osmani (2006) on employment and poverty, indicate a chain containing five links. First, the economy needs to grow – Osmani calls this the growth factor. Second, growth needs to create jobs, i.e. the employment elasticity of growth needs to be relatively high. This means, in Khan's terms, as cited by Zepeda et al. (2007:6) an elasticity that is not as low as to exacerbate the scarcity neither of job opportunities nor so high as to militate against increases in productivity. Third, while the quality of jobs created is important, efforts cannot be centred on good quality jobs, i.e. formal, full-time, well-paid wage jobs. Activities in the informal sector that create wage employment and increase opportunities for people to employ themselves must also be considered. Fourth, for growth to benefit the poor, the wages of poor employees as well as the incomes of the poor self-employed need to increase based on productivity enhancements. Fifth, poor workers need to be able to benefit from the creation of new wage jobs and widening opportunities for more rewarding self-employment activities.

Bohlmann, Du Toit, Gupta and Schoeman (2007:1) assert that policy-making in South Africa has to find a new paradigm – one where employment creation and resultant poverty alleviation is not merely accepted as a by-product of economic growth, but where employment creation is viewed as a key accelerator of economic growth. Social development targeted at mobilizing and empowering the unemployed needs to constitute the backbone of any growth, employment and redistribution policy. The focus should be on designing and implementing policies that truly empowers and mobilizes this untapped potential of society towards spurring higher levels of future economic growth rather than merely awarding handouts.

4.6 THE ROLE OF SOUTH AFRICAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN POVERTY ALLEVIATION

The current literature on poverty alleviation measures in South Africa indicates that at national government level there are abundant policies, acts and strategic programmes aimed at realizing both the principles and policy programmes of RDP. However, there is an indication that the existing bottleneck to the flow and delivery of services to alleviate poverty seems to be at local government level.

The local sphere of government in South Africa is often referred to as grassroots government due to its proximity and intimate relationship with the communities it serves. On general terms local government can be regarded as a government institution that is at the lowest level in government hierarchy (Van Nieker, van der Waldt and Jonker, 2001:87). Various policies have been developed to facilitate poverty alleviation and development at local level. At the centre of any development is citizen participation. The effectiveness of public policy depends on the ability of the people to participate throughout the public policy process. The Municipal Structures Act (1998) and the Municipal Systems Act (2000) established the broad principles for a system of participation democracy. The Municipal Systems Act (2000) emphasizes three elements:

1. The municipality must foster participation in
 - a. integrated development planning
 - b. the evaluation of its performance through performance management
 - c. the budgetary process and
 - d. strategic decisions around service delivery
2. The municipality must enable participation through capacity building in the community and of staff and councillors.
3. Funds must be allocated and used for the above purposes

The Municipal Structures Act (1998) provided for participation through structures like ward committees. Furthermore, the Integrated Development Planning process provides an opportunity for citizens to identify their development needs and priorities

to ensure that local government is responsive in addressing the needs of the people. Planning process is critical to development. Community-based planning in particular serves a number of purposes. First, it builds a sense of community, becoming an organizing process. Second, it educates residents on what resources and threats exists on their neighbourhood. Third, it builds community power, allowing residents to determine what kinds of development they want and thus better repel speculators. Finally, it helps residents plan for the ideal, without regard to limitations imposed by elites.

As early as 1998, the White Paper on the role of local government to alleviate poverty and to improve the quality of citizens' lives was published. Vyas-Doorgapersad and Muller (2006:1) indicate that given the role of local government of reducing historical socio-economic backlogs through the acceleration of service delivery to local disadvantaged communities, it has become vital that a strong synergetic partnership between central and local government, civil society organizations and private and donor communities be galvanized to rectify associated inefficiencies.

There is no doubt that the local government authorities are strategically the most relevant source of implementation of poverty alleviation policies and legal directives. However, literature indicates a number of challenges faced by the local government. These relate to corrupt local government officials, embezzlement of funds targeted for poverty alleviation, nepotism practices, poor monitoring and evaluation, leaving decision-making to civil society organizations with poorly trained personnel, limited involvement of the poor people in the implementation of projects, etc. One of the stumbling blocks at local government level is the poor performance of ward councillors in managing ward committee structures to deliver services. These structures are composed of over ten members with different functions focusing on economic activities, political education, women affairs, old age issues, education, health and social development. There is no doubt that if these structures at local government were effective in their functions, poverty alleviation programmes would be sustainable.

In summary of this review at local government level, it can be asserted that over the years, this structure has failed to alleviate poverty levels to the level that is satisfactory, and to expand infrastructure, hence there are so many riots and strikes in many of South Africa's municipalities. Poor management and leadership are the main reasons cited by dissatisfied citizens. It is for this reason, therefore, that evaluating the role of civil society organizations in poverty alleviation, which is the focus of this study, should also analyse management and leadership in these institutions.

4.7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Viewed broadly and comparatively, this empirical review has established that poverty levels are high worldwide with 850 million people being classified as extremely poor, especially in Latin America. About 8 million people per year die due to lack of food sustenance. With the ever-escalating food prices worldwide, it means that more people will continue to die. Some countries are strategically in a more favourable position to realize the MDGs' target set for 2015.

Continentially, however, the African continent has large pockets of chronic poverty, entrenched over a long period of time, that is, from the colonial era to date. Africa's economy grows slowly, while its population grows fast and huge. Furthermore, a majority of African public administrations experience governance challenges, with some leaders ignoring economic development. Limited infrastructure, literacy levels and less sophisticated technology and budget constraints continue to compromise poverty alleviation measures. Children and women worldwide and in Africa in particular are more exposed and affected by poverty (Du Toit, 2005; Sach, 2005; World Development Bank: MDGs' Chart, 2005; Oosthuizen and Nieuwoudt, 2003). Un-democratic practices and exclusion seem to be the reasons for high levels of unemployment among women and youth.

The poverty levels in South Africa are comparatively low despite the fact that the country has been experiencing economic growth. Since the political transition in

1994, public policies to address South Africa's inequalities and poverty have been pursued through RDP and a variety of legislative initiatives. However, the government's ability to address social problems has been constrained by its commitment both to implement strict fiscal policies and to pursue structural economic reforms, which inevitably have short-term social costs. Furthermore, the implementation of government policies has been negatively affected by the lack of capacity and involvement of communities at the local level. It is evident from the literature review that, notwithstanding the fact that access to formal sector employment is an important factor in improved levels of income, South Africa has been less successful in addressing employment creation to the extent that it alleviates poverty and inequality.

Although government has committed itself to working in partnership with civil society in implementing its policies, it seems as if this has not been as effective as expected. Thus the central objective of this present study is to analyse how civil society organizations implement poverty alleviation programmes in collaboration and partnership with government and the extent to which this relationship ensures empowerment and sustainability. Hopefully the findings of this study will throw more light on how to improve the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes so that through this process the poor are empowered and the effects of poverty alleviation are sustainable. Sustainable poverty alleviation programmes are critical in ensuring that the poor do not fall back into poverty trap.