

## CHAPTER 2

### POVERTY AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM

#### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

This study is about the evaluation of a Poverty Relief Programme (PRP) in the Limpopo Province within the context of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) from a social work perspective. Poverty is a social problem which is evident in both the developed and the developing countries. In this study, the researcher selects to discuss the advent of poverty only within the developing countries of the Sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa.

Poverty is endemic in Sub-Saharan Africa and according to Oakley and Clegg (1999:32), “in the early 1990’s it was estimated that almost a half of the region’s population lived below the poverty line and that Sub-Saharan Africa was the only region in the world in which the number of poor was actually growing at roughly the same rate as the population.” Sub-Saharan Africa includes countries such as South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Mali, Ghana, Kenya, Angola, Sierra Leone, Chad, Ethiopia and Guinea (compare Masiye, Tembo, Chisanga & Mwanza, 1998; Oakley & Clegg, 1999; Atteh, 1999.)

Sparks (1993:8) contends the reasons for the Sub-Saharan Africa to be the poorest region in Africa are that it has the highest population which exceeded 525 million during 1993, it has poor soils and harsh climates, it has poor human and physical infrastructure, it has the highest urbanization and population growth, its politicians formulate inappropriate public policies and that the region has huge foreign debt.

There is basically a decline in the socio-economic and political institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa. Spark (1993:9) says these countries’ economies have drastically declined from where they were during their independence from colonialism. This poses a serious problem of continued poverty, famine and wars. This state of affairs is disturbing to the

whole region because the misfortunes felt in one Sub-Saharan state are transmitted to its neighbours. Katzen (1993:781) reported that South African economy is declining as compared to the 1960's when she "managed to be the highest country in the world with that economic growth." The researcher has identified as an example that the decline in the socio-economic and political setting of Zimbabwe automatically affects the South Africans. The current state affairs in South Africa is that the refugees from the neighbouring countries have migrated to the country leaving the citizens with limited job opportunities.

For Robinson (2002:32-33), Zimbabwe is on the brink of economic collapse because of its President Robert Mugabe's inappropriate economic policies, the occupation of commercial farms by war veterans who do not have the farming skills and the advent of drought. Unemployment in Zimbabwe has reached an alarming rate of 60% and is accompanied by an inflation rate of 112%. Msomi and Munusamy (2003:4) say the South African Statistics put the official unemployment figure at 30%. This is to mean that unemployment rate in Zimbabwe is twice more than it is in South Africa. There is famine in that country and the United Nations World Food Programme is feeding the nation. This circumstance results in people migrating to the nearby South Africa. Hawthorne (2002:35) states that "there are already 2 million illegal immigrants from Zimbabwe living and looking for work in South Africa." With this shocking statistic, it symbolizes that South Africa is in a poverty problem itself.

In the near future, South Africa will be as poor as some of the countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa. *Rural Development Framework* (1997:15) reported that 40% of the South Africa households were poor during the 1995 October Household Survey, and that this percent represented about 52.8% of the whole population. Poverty has since then continued to increase. This trend was captured by Gumede (2001:16) who states that "poverty in SA is severe; the UN Development Programme estimates it at 45%." And yet Borat (2000:795) has recorded "the total number of dwellings in South Africa is about 9.5 million, of which about 3 million are poor households." It is shocking to note that over one thirds of the population is living in absolute poverty.

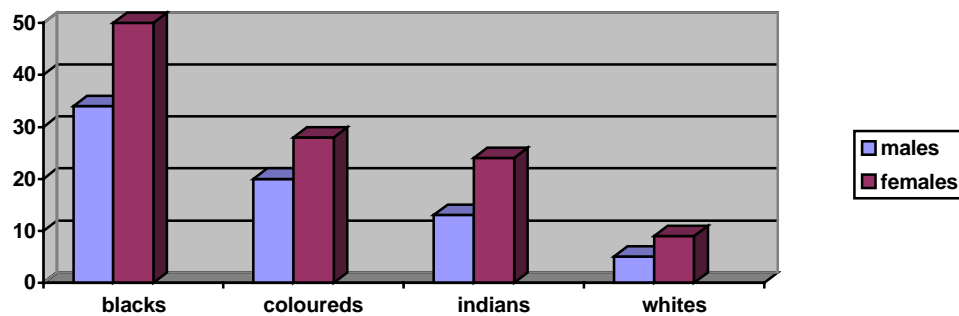
Poverty is closely related to unemployment which is at more than 34% and that more than 26% of those employed earn R500 or less per month (LoveLife, 2001:8). *South*

*Africa Yearbook* (2000:267) supports by mentioning that about 22% of South Africa's economically active population was unemployed during 1997.

In South Africa, poverty affects people differently.

Poverty affects people according to the racial line. The poor became highly represented within the African communities as outlined by Borat (2000:796) who says "the racial disparities are also evident in that Africans constitute 69 per cent of the labour force and 88 per cent of all poor individuals in the labour force, while the corresponding figures for Whites are 17 and 2.2 per cent, respectively."

Poverty in South Africa affects people along the gender. Popenoe, Boulton and Cunningham (1998:378) released Figure 2.1 to support this proposition.



**Figure 2.1: South African Poverty Distribution according to Race and Sex during 1995**

According to Figure 2.1 above, poverty is highly concentrated among the African males and females with women scoring higher than men by 34% and 50%, respectively. The Coloured, Asians and Whites have scores which indicate that women are poorer than men, with 20% and 28%, 13% and 24%, and 5% and 9%, respectively.

Poverty affects people according to the family type of origin. May and Vaughan (1999:68) say "the poverty rate among female-headed households in 1995 was 60%, considerably higher than the rate of 31% in male-headed households." Women who head families without husbands usually carry the burden of socio-economically supporting

their own children, parents and relatives. This condition reduces the resources intended to supplement the existence of a household. There is also an emergence of a child-headed family in South Africa today due to the high death rate of parents who are victims of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases such as malaria, cholera and tuberculosis (LoveLife, 2001:11). This family will be the poorest of all other forms of family because children are physically and intellectually incompetent to support themselves. This means that in the near future, there will be a challenging requirement for the community-based structures who will perform home-visits to the families of those affected.

Poverty affects people according to their physical and age orientation. In this instance, poverty affects children, the aged and the disabled more than other sectors of the community. “Moreover, three in five children live in poor household, and many children are exposed to public and domestic violence, malnutrition and inconsistent parenting and schooling” (May & Vaughan, 1999:68). Children, the aged and the disabled are poor solely because they are physically and or intellectually incompetent to support themselves.

Poverty affect people according to their occupations. According to Bhorat (2000:798), in South Africa “ the two poorest occupation groups are domestic services and agricultural labourers, and account for 72 per cent of all the employed poor in the labour market.” These people are in this study classified as the working poor and will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Poverty is distributed unevenly in the nine South African provinces. Popenoe, Boulton and Cunningham (1998:379) list provinces according to their poverty percentages in Table 2.1 below.

***Table 2.1: Poverty Distribution according to nine South African Provinces***

<b>South African Provinces</b>	<b>Poverty Distribution</b>
Limpopo Province	47%
Eastern Cape	45%

North West	37%
Mpumalanga	36%
Northern Cape	33%
Kwazulu-Natal	32%
Gauteng	29%
Western Cape	24%
Free State	17%

As indicated in Table 2.1 above, areas which were previously reserved for Blacks during the apartheid regime, such as the Limpopo Province, suffer the incident of poverty more than other areas. This is due to the reason that the apartheid regime through its homeland policies kept most of the rural population away from the economic cities (Cross, 2001:113). Bryceson and Bank (2001:7) contend that policies such as the influx control system ensured that Africans who were surplus to the labour needs of the cities were kept in the rural areas.

Gauteng which is the economic hub of the country but has high poverty rate due to the reason that people from other provinces have migrated to it with the hope that they will find jobs. When people cannot find jobs elsewhere, they resort to stay in the informal settlements which are scattered all over the province and therefore Gauteng province is further faced with a challenge for providing infrastructure to this population.

Poverty is a complex issue which requires a detailed discussion such as this chapter which will discuss it as a social problem according to the following five sections:

- Conceptualization of the concept social problem
- Conceptualization of poverty as a condition of deprivation
- Theoretical perspectives of poverty
- Causes and effects of poverty
- Strategies to eliminate poverty

## 2.2. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE CONCEPT SOCIAL PROBLEM

Poverty is a social problem and in discussing it within that context, it is important to first contextualize the concept social problem in this section.

When the systems of a society, namely: education, family, religion and culture are interacting with each other in a harmonious manner, society is said to be in an equilibrium state. When these systems are no longer interacting in harmony with each other, we term the misfortune, a social problem. Ritzer (1988:204) explains that “ the parts of the system, as well as the system as a whole, are seen as existing in a state of equilibrium, so that changes in one part lead to changes in other parts.”

The disequilibrium is exemplified when a family system fails to socialize its member who becomes deviant, drops out of school, does crime and is sentenced to a few years in jail. Different systems were affected by this member who may for example, divorce his wife causing family disintegration, commit crime and affect the justice system, and fights with jail inmates causing problems in the correctional system.

Viewed from an angle that disequilibrium caused by the disfunctioning of some of the societal systems when they interact with one another, the researcher adds other examples of social problems as wars, crime, back street abortions, HIV/AIDS, and poor housing.

In order to explain the concept social problem, Sullivan and Thompson (1994:5) distinguished between personal and social problems when they mention that social problems are public issues which have an impact on a large number of people and are matters of public debate and collective solutions and are not individual or familial ones. Horton and Leslie (1981:4) maintain that "a social problem is a condition affecting a significant number of people in ways considered undesirable, about which is felt something can be done through collective social action." Issues are categorized as social problems only if they threaten the values and goals of a large number of individuals, groups, communities and organizations.

The second important characteristic of the social problem is that it can be redressed

through collective action. Collectivity calls for a group of individuals, organizations and government institutions to mobilize towards a common goal of doing something to reduce or ameliorate the condition. Government institutions and nongovernmental organizations are more effective in eliminating or reducing social problems than persons individually.

Weeks (1992:316) maintains that social problems are solved through approaches which should address the whole collectivity instead of particular individuals. In this context, social problems are solved through community development programmes which are formulated, implemented and evaluated by government and or the nongovernmental organizations.

Lauer (1992:5-6) contends that social problems change over time, they are viewed differently from the perspectives of different individuals and groups, and that they are "an objective, observable state of affairs (for example, pollution), some "thing" that may be studied, measured, and in one way or another, manipulated or changed." Social problems are conditions communities consider as troublesome or threatening to their well-being. The concept of manipulation impose another feature of a social problem, namely that if a condition cannot be controlled or changed, it cannot be considered a social problem. Natural conditions, eg. disasters such as floods, hurricane, winds, and volcano which cannot be caused by social systems cannot be remedied by collective actions, and as a consequence, they cannot be classified as social problems, but rather as natural problems.

Peck and Dolch (2001:91) state that "when members of society recognize a problem, begin publicly to discuss the issue involved, and express a belief that something should be done to solve it, we witness the beginning of social problem." A social problem is therefore visible to many individuals, groups, and or organizations. Social problems are observable and are articulated by those who are stressed by their advent.

Based on the proceeding discussion, it seems as if the concept social problem has the following characteristics:

- it develops when the systems of a particular society fail to support each other,

- it is concerned with issues which affect a number of people or communities,
- social problems can be changed through institutional collectivist approaches which means that government can formulate, implement and evaluate programmes intended to address them,
- social problems are observable and
- a problem is regarded as a social problem by those who are affected by it.

The social problem which is relevant in this study is poverty and therefore, it will be conceptualized in the succeeding section.

### **2.3. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF POVERTY**

In attempting to conceptualize poverty as a social problem, the researcher will divide this section into five parts, namely:

- the first part will define the concept poverty
- the second part discusses poverty as a condition of deprivation
- the third part discusses the classification of deprivation
- the fourth part explains the categories of deprivation
- the fifth part discusses the forms of deprivation.

#### **2.3.1. DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPT POVERTY**

"Poverty is a condition of scarcity or deprivation of material resources characterized by a lack of adequate consumption of the necessities of life" (Popenoe, 1995:219). Any definition of poverty which purports that it is a condition of scarcity or deprivation of the economic resources is according to the researcher classified as materialistic. This class of poverty is further indicated by a definition which maintains that "to be poor is to be unable, because of a lack of monetary resources, to secure adequate food, shelter, clothing, health care, recreation, and the other necessities (much less the amenities) of life for oneself or one's family" (Lauer, 1992: 196). It is true that the scarcity or deprivation of the economic resources could lead to the inability of an individual to provide own and family needs.



Poverty can also be classified as a non-material inadequacy in the form of social, political and cultural dimensions of life. For instance, Weeks (1992:315) accepts that “poverty is a condition of mental or emotional, cognitive, interpersonal, opportunity and personal rights deprivation.” For Blakemore (2003:79), it is not only the lack of money that defines poverty but the lack of things which are widely perceived as necessary by society because poverty “is an obstacle to people being able to take part in activities (such as watching television) that are customary in that society.” Popenoe, Boulton and Cunningham (1998:429) add that poverty is a condition of “an exclusion of rural population from the urbanized areas which are characterized with specialized retail businesses and industries which require large workforce and that many deprived people hope that they will be able to find jobs and improve their economic situations in the cities.” Non-material inadequacy are inadequate educational opportunities, unpleasant working conditions and powerlessness (Haralambos & Holborn, 1995:124).

In this context, poverty as a non-material inadequacy is any condition in the life of an individual or community which prohibits them from participating fully in the socio-economic, political and cultural activities of own social systems.

It is thus clear that poverty extends beyond insufficient income as it includes also the inaccessibility to essential services and the marginalisation of the rural population (May & Vaughan, 1999:69). In this context, deprivation is the absence, the failure, inadequacy and obstruction of individuals and communities from reaching resources, a condition which predisposes them to the incidence of poverty.

According to Van Zyl (1995:5), deprivation means “that which is lacking and hence acutely felt.” In this context, Selwyn (2002:3) says “exclusion is not about gradations of inequality, but about the mechanisms that act to detach groups of people from the social mainstream.” Poverty exists therefore where members of society are excluded from the socio-economic mainstream of the communities to which they belong (Haralambos & Holborn, 1995:125).

The researcher is of the opinion that exclusion should have a number of synonyms such as marginalization, detachment, disadvantaged, denied and isolation. Exclusion is a condition which does not accompany poverty, it instead causes poverty. To explain

this relationship, the researcher suggests that the poor became poor because they were prohibited from accessing certain socio-economic areas of the society, such as cities, for example. The poor will be better off if the social policies are designed to bring them closer to the socio-economic, political and cultural resources of society.

Poverty is a condition through which people are measured according to socio-economic, political and cultural resources they have. Poverty is a judgment which a particular segment of society attach to the other segment in order to classify it as living an unreasonable and unacceptable life.

Poverty develops when there is a lack of socio-economic, political and cultural resources in the communities. The suggestion which maintains that poverty is a condition of deprivation requires an in-depth discussion in this section.

#### **2.4. POVERTY AS A CONDITION OF DEPRIVATION**

To understand the concept poverty, it is important to look at it as a condition of deprivation which enclose the following elements:

- Distinction between intrinsic deprivation and extrinsic deprivation
  
- Three categories of deprivation
  - Economic Deprivation
  - Social Deprivation
  - Political Deprivation
  
- Types of deprivation
  - Material resources
  - Mental or emotional deprivation
  - Cognitive deprivation
  - Interpersonal deprivation
  - Deprivation of opportunity

- Deprivation of personal rights
- Physical deprivation
- Forms of deprivation
  - Absolute deprivation
  - Relative deprivation
  - Cultural deprivation
  - Conjunctural deprivation

In the context of poverty as a condition of deprivation one can firstly distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic deprivation.

#### **2.4.1. DISTINCTION BETWEEN INTRINSIC DEPRIVATION AND EXTRINSIC DEPRIVATION**

In this part, the researcher distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic deprivation. Intrinsic deprivation maintains that poverty is caused by the poor themselves whilst extrinsic deprivation maintains that it is caused by the external factors which are beyond to the control of the poor.

##### **2.4.1.1. INTRINSIC DEPRIVATION**

Intrinsic deprivation is those conditions which are said to be within an individual or community.

“Intrinsic factors include individual or group/ family pathology in the form of physical and /or psychological dependencies which predispose the individual or family to the development of social problem” (Weeks, 1999:316).

“An alternative view is that the poor are unable to save, and that income cuts will do nothing for the rural poor or unemployed” (Naidoo, 2000:30). Thus poverty is within the social system mainly because the poor fail to participate in activities which can in future set them free from the problem. According to the intrinsic deprivation, poverty is

eminent in communities because the poor actively participate in activities which reward their own personal enjoyment without regard of those activities which reward their well-being. The poor therefore, will only direct their energies towards their immediate gratification such as the consumption of large quantities of drugs and alcohol, commit crime and practice polygamous relationships.

This state of affairs means that community development programmes intended for the poor will not be successful if they do not include strategies intended to change the poor's attitudes and lifestyles. Thus the intrinsic deprivation can be resolved through the residual approach which "involve focusing on individual change and adaptation, with structures remaining intact" (Weeks, 1999:316). Strategies of this kind could be those of addressing for instance substance abuse and alcoholism within the family and community environments.

#### **2.4.1.2. EXTRINSIC DEPRIVATION**

Extrinsic deprivations "involve a wider variety of conditions, beyond the control of most individuals and which predispose all persons to the development of social problems" (Weeks, 1999:16).

Extrinsic factors become available in the communities whether individuals like it or not. They usually affect the whole community and as such are external.

The extrinsic factor as a cause of poverty is in this study exemplified by our neighbour, Zimbabwe, whose policy of grabbing land from the commercial farmers and redistributing it to the war veterans who have no capacity of farming has resulted in the collapse of the national economy. This malpractice has turned the "once the breadbasket of Southern Africa into a basket case" (Robinson, 2002:33).

In this regard, the extrinsic deprivation can be resolved through the institutional collectivist approach which propagates the major reform of the socio-economic and political policies or institutions in the country. An example of the institutional modification is reflected in May and Vaughan (1999:67) who mention that that both poverty and inequality in South Africa could be reduced by policies which aim at

redistributing assets, such as land or finance, from the wealthy to the poor.

From the discussion above, the researcher concludes that effective strategies in developing poor communities should include both the intrinsic and the extrinsic approaches in their strategies. People should be motivated to take charge in the community development programmes which are intended to develop them, and at the same time, government should create supportive environments for that development, for example, by providing them with funds, infrastructure, education and training.

Atteh (1999:246) sums that “ Schumacher argues that to alleviate poverty and promote grassroots development in poor countries, development strategies must be human-centred, basic needs-oriented, labour-intensive, local resource-based, community-based, family-focused, participatory, indigenous-controlled, sustainable and self-help efforts that focus on small-scale production.”

An effective intervention into poverty need to be strategized into measurable and operational manner. In this regard, the intrinsic and extrinsic deprivation are broad concepts which need to be divided into small and manageable components, namely: economic exclusion, social exclusion and political exclusion and powerlessness.

## **2.4.2. CATEGORIES OF DEPRIVATION**

Deprivation implies an exclusion situation which according to Davidson and Erskine (1992:12), has three categories, namely: economic deprivation, social deprivation and political deprivation and powerlessness.

### **2.4.2.1. ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION**

Economic deprivation happens when people are denied an opportunity to participate in the community development programmes of their communities in that they have the lowered knowledge, skills and attitudes towards development.

Popenoe, Boulton and Cunningham (1998:428) maintain that “the deprived, the poor, the non-white and unmarried mothers make up the majority of this group.” Blacks, women,

youth and the disabled were not sufficiently employed during the previous South African dispensation, and if they were employed, they were most probably earning less incomes.

Poverty can be the result of economic exclusion especially when the economically active sectors of the society are pushed away from the economic resources of the society. This condition predisposes them to the high incidents of unemployment which usually results into poverty.

People should be equally represented in the socio-economic sectors of their community development programmes. It is reported that to achieve this requirement, the South African government is to “create jobs that are sustainable, and increase the ability of the economy to absorb new job-seekers in both the formal and less formal sectors” (*RDP White Paper: Discussion Document*, 1994:245).

#### **2.4.2.2. SOCIAL DEPRIVATION**

Social deprivation happens when people are excluded from the social activities of their communities because, for instance, they are black, women or the disabled.

The *Rural Development Framework* (1997:9) notes that “women, and female-headed households are particularly disadvantaged. As a result, three quarters of rural children are growing up in households below the poverty line.”

Ideally, when people are socially excluded from others, they lack of social interaction. A person who does not interact with others cannot learn the basic communication skills from them and as a consequence he/she will be unable to develop him/herself. This results in poverty.

In order to address the question of social exclusion, women, youth and the disabled should be prioritized when contracts are awarded for tenders (*Preferential Procurement Framework Policy*, 2000).

Social exclusion or deprivation shall be addressed when the previously disadvantaged

groups are afforded an opportunity to participate in the social activities of their communities.

#### **2.4.2.3. POLITICAL DEPRIVATION AND POWERLESSNESS**

When communities are discouraged into participating in the decision-making processes of their environment and they become powerless, political deprivation develops.

In this context, Taylor (1994:124) mentioned the following about political exclusion: “when people have been denied access to education, health care, housing and work over so many years it is not difficult to understand why there are intense battles over competing claims for power and resources.” Boule (1997:7) adds that in South Africa, “the former homelands were dumping grounds for the young, the old and the infirm.” This resulted in them having little influence on the political direction of the country.

Poverty is closely linked with the political system of societies, meaning that policies which are formulated and implemented by politicians can either increase or ameliorate poverty. Thus, policies which are aimed at marginalizing certain sectors of the society expose those sectors to the hardships and ultimately poverty.

In this context, the political exclusion of the majority of South African communities, advantaged the whites in the previous dispensation. This state of affairs is being addressed by the current *South African Constitution* (Act No. 18 of 1996, Section 19 (1) – (3) (b)) which lists the political rights, namely; to form a political party of own choice, to campaign for the party of choice or causes, the right for fair election and to vote. In this context, the previously disenfranchised will be able to voice their concern with regard to the politics of their communities.

Besides economic exclusion, social exclusion and political exclusion, deprivation can also have different types which are discussed below.

#### **2.4.3. TYPES OF DEPRIVATION**

In this study, the researcher utilized Weeks’ (1999) format for classifying poverty as a

condition of deprivation into different types of deprivation according to which it can be conceptualized as a social problem. These types of deprivation are, namely: the material resources deprivation, mental or emotional deprivation, cognitive deprivation, interpersonal deprivation, opportunity deprivation, personal rights deprivation and physical deprivation.

#### **2.4.3.1. MATERIAL RESOURCES DEPRIVATION**

Material resources deprivation is when there is inadequate material resources such as income, food and shelter to the communities.

Atteh (1999:248) says that those who are deprived of material resources are “afflicted by absolute poverty and have limited and insufficient food, clothing and housing.” Material resources deprivation also occurs when people cannot get what it is due for them because of the government budget deficits and unemployment. It also includes people who qualify for grants but cannot receive them (*Infrastructure Report*, 2000:29).

The material deprivation is concerned with receiving of social services in the form of observable entities by individuals, groups, communities and organizations.

#### **2.4.3.2. MENTAL OR EMOTIONAL DEPRIVATION**

Weeks (1999:315) contends that the mental or emotional deprivation includes all forms of mental illness.

During the apartheid regime in South Africa, for example, political prisoners were detained without trial. This state of affairs was against human rights and mentally and emotionally affected those who were arrested.

“In emotional isolation, a person feels a lack of deep emotional attachment to one specific person. By contrast, people who experience social isolation suffer from a lack of friends, associates, or relatives” (Feldman, 1998:198).

People who are mentally and emotionally isolated cannot actively interact with others.



Oppressive governments in Africa such as Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, still practice this exclusion by putting opposition parties' members in the solitary confinement. In this condition, a person is locked alone in a jail cell and is denied any communication with the outside world.

The mental or emotional deprivation in South Africa has been addressed, in that the arrested, detained, accused and convicted people have their respective rights to protection as contained in *The National Action Plan for the Promotion & Protection of Human Rights* (1998: 86-87).

#### **2.4.3.3. COGNITIVE DEPRIVATION**

Cognitive deprivation is the developmental disability which occurs when individuals are handicapped in such a condition that they are unable to do something for themselves.

Carson, Butcher and Coleman (1988:483) mention that people who are cognitively deprived lack of intellectual stimulation and do not positively interact with others and their environments, and as such they are unable to develop themselves. Such people will automatically be poor because they will be unable to manipulate the environment in order to extract resources necessary for their existence.

Cognitive deprivation occurs both naturally and accidentally. Most individuals who are deprived in this way are recipients of the social welfare services, as noted in the *Infrastructure Report* (2000:28) which lists them as children, youth, people with disabilities and the aged. The South African Department of Social Development has formulated programmes specifically intended to assist these categories of persons. One of these programmes, the Poverty Relief Programme (PRP), will be discussed in the succeeding chapter.

#### **2.4.3.4. INTERPERSONAL DEPRIVATION**

Interpersonal deprivation is concerned with the relationships which people develop when they interact with each other. Deprivation of this kind is exemplified by when

couples are undergoing a divorce process, domestic violence and different forms of child abuse.

People are inherently social beings who need to belong and participate in social groups. They become deprived interpersonally when they are isolated such as, for example, when they are institutionalized. Carson, Butcher and Coleman (1988:113) explain that “in an institution, as compared with an ordinary home, there is likely to be less warmth and physical contact, less intellectual, emotional, and social stimulation, and a lack of encouragement and help in positive learning.”

People who are deprived of interacting with others develop poor intellectual functioning and major psychological problems (Papalia & Olds, 1992:165). As it has been reported in the previous item, people with psychological defects are poor in general because they are unable to actively improve themselves and their own environments.

#### **2.4.3.5. OPPORTUNITY DEPRIVATION**

Deprivation of opportunity is when individuals and communities are denied access to education and training, medical care, fulfilling work and to participate in their community development programmes.

During the previous dispensation in South Africa for example, blacks were deprived an opportunity to own land. They were crammed in the barren land formerly known as homelands. The *RDP Development Monitor* (2001:4) states that “the right to the land lies at the heart of the origin of South Africa’s struggle for political liberation.”

Another example of deprivation of opportunity is the recent privatization of public assets which is in accord with the stipulation of the RDP policy and criticized by Aveleth (1999:71) who argues that the “marginalised rural communities are being unable to access necessary services because they do not have the money to buy those services.”

It is true that poverty is evident in communities where people are deprived of opportunities, such the opportunity for further education, to be employed, to have a

house, to participate in the community development programmes and an opportunity to be involved in the socio-economic and political processes of his/her community.

The deprivation of opportunity is being addressed through the current legislation. This is noted by Aveleth (1999:69) who contends that “ land restitution is the only land reform programme required by the Constitution which is aimed at addressing the injustices of apartheid.”

Deprivation of opportunity will be effectively addressed only when people are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in matters affecting their lives and the economies of their country.

#### **2.4.3.6. PERSONAL RIGHTS DEPRIVATION**

Deprivation of personal rights is when the policies do not protect the violation of human rights, people are discriminated against and are generally not free.

When people are discriminated against and are not free, we say they are oppressed.

Democratic states such as South Africa ensure that people are free during all the milestones of their lives. The South African Constitution is in place to ensure accessibility of all to equality and freedom (Act No. 108 of 1996, Sections 9-18).

“Freedom of choice is reflected in provisions that offer recipients considerable latitude in exercising their individual preferences” (Gilbert, Specht & Terrell, 1993:61).

When people’s personal rights are violated say by the politicians and or by governmental institutions, they find it difficult to develop themselves and as a consequence they become or stay poor. People of this kind are said to be oppressed and they do not have much choice to run their lives positively. Oppression stifle the people’s movements to the socio-economic resources of the society.

#### **2.4.3.7. PHYSICAL DEPRIVATION**

Physical deprivation is when individuals and communities are infected with diseases which detract them from performing productive actions towards their own development.

Physical deprivation as an absolute poverty is the absence of the minimum requirements to maintain a person's physical efficiency (Atteh, 1999:249). This could result for instance in persons being infested with HIV/AIDS which "is expected to exacerbate the problems of an already poverty stricken population" (Thomas, 1996:18).

It is true most people living with HIV/AIDS have a reduced performance. The RDP intends to facilitate government departments and the nongovernmental organizations towards developing effective strategies of fighting the pandemic (Thomas, 1996:18).

Most of the poverty-stricken sectors of our communities are highly represented by those individuals with physical defects who are unable to exploit their immediate environments. These are, for example, the disabled, children and women.

It is clear that the different types of deprivation can be utilized to describe different dimensions of poverty. From another angle, deprivation can also be stated into four forms of deprivation which can be utilized to explain poverty as a social problem, namely: absolute deprivation, relative deprivation, cultural deprivation and conjunctural deprivation.

#### **2.4.4. FORMS OF DEPRIVATION**

In this section, the researcher discusses the four forms of deprivation, namely: absolute deprivation, relative deprivation, cultural deprivation and conjunctural deprivation, as another way to understand the concept poverty as a condition of deprivation.

##### **2.4.4.1. ABSOLUTE DEPRIVATION**

The first form of deprivation to conceptualize poverty as a social problem is an absolute

deprivation.

According to Popenoe (1995:219), absolute poverty set an income level below which a person or family cannot sustain a minimal standard of living." Conceptualization of poverty as a social problem in the context of absolute deprivation is an "attempt to establish an economic level below which people are unable to achieve the basic necessities of life" (Sullivan & Thompson, 1994:162).

Every individual or household who earns below the specified level is defined as absolute poor. In the South African context, for example, May, Woolard and Klasen (2000:30) state that "according to these definitions, households that expend less than R352,53 per adult equivalent are regarded as poor, households that expend less than R193.77 per adult equivalent are regarded as ultra-poor." Poverty is defined through a process of first determining the threshold of commodities and then classify persons according to the resources they possess (Mingione, 1996:7).

If an individual or family receives less than it is expected, then an individual or family is classified as poor.

Absolute poverty is a measurement which is utilized to establish a point at which to denote the poverty datum threshold below which poverty begins. Social work practitioners utilize this form of poverty in order to construct means tests which are used when decisions are made as to who qualifies for social assistance and who does not. In this regard, those individuals who are classified as eligible are the ones whose means tests categorize them as falling below the poverty datum line.

#### **2.4.4.2. RELATIVE DEPRIVATION**

The second form of deprivation to conceptualize poverty as a social problem is relative deprivation.

"Relative definitions place a certain proportion of the members of any society in the poverty category. An individual is relatively poor if he or she has substantially less than is considered to be normal in a given society" (Popenoe, 1995:219). This is to

say that people are rated poor only after they were compared with others who are classified as non-poor, possess some attributes and live a certain type of life.

Relative deprivation is utilized for the categorization of people into classes such as the lower class, middle class and the high class. The lower class comprises the poor.

According to the relative measurement of poverty, the population is divided into income groups called classes and these classes are arranged in an orderly fashion of being lower class, middle class and higher class (Lauer, 1992:278). The higher class is composed of people who earn high incomes whilst the lower class is composed of those who earn little and are highly represented by poor.

This is an ineffective method of measurement in that, it can classify a person as falling under the lower class due to the income he/she earns without considering other means he/she conducts for generating income, for example, whereas a person is a labourer during the day and owns a business which earns him/her a fortune after work.

#### **2.4.4.3. CULTURAL DEPRIVATION**

The third form of deprivation to conceptualize poverty as a social problem is cultural deprivation.

According to Sullivan and Thompson (1994:163), "the cultural deprivation of poverty views poverty not only in terms of how many resources people have, but also in terms of why they have failed to achieve a higher economic level." Curran and Renzetti (1996:107) write that the poor is a group which possesses "beliefs, values and goals that are significantly different from those of the remainder of the population and that this shared belief system perpetuates a particular (that is, a poverty) lifestyle."

Cultural deprivation should answer a question of why the poor became poor not only in terms of the economic element of their life, but also in terms of their social standards of living.

Poverty within the cultural deprivation view is due to a lifestyle which members of the poor groups were socialized into and which they transmit from one generation to the next. People within the poor groups could be economically sound, but their living standards are still infested with the social ills which are frowned by the entire social system, for example, a rich man still receiving stolen goods from criminals.

#### **2.4.4.4. CONJUNCTURAL DEPRIVATION**

The forth form of deprivation to conceptualize poverty as a social problem is called the conjunctural deprivation.

Atteh (1999:252) maintains that conjunctural deprivation occurs when self-sufficient people are thrown into a crisis which is caused either by human or nature factors, for example, in the wake of political instability or the advent of natural disasters, respectively. People become victims of wars wherein they are forced to flee their homes as refugees and leave their entire life investment behind. In the same context natural disasters or catastrophies such as floods, winds, drought and fires are able to wipe all the infrastructure and cultivation within a short space in time, leaving communities with nothing to own.

Conjunctural deprivation is well explained in the reports of the advent of famine in Southern Africa today. Munusamy (2002:8), Ntuli (2002:8) and Ka’Nkosi (2002:9) contend that famine is caused by factors such as wars and drought in Angola, drought in Zambia, farm invasion and drought in Zimbabwe, floods and drought in Mozambique, drought in Malawi, poor harvest after heavy rains, frost, hailstorm and tornadoes in Lesotho and bad weather which caused food shortages in Lesotho. Ntuli (2002:8) further contends that “ about 13 million people in Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe are threatened by starvation and the World Food Programme has warned of an increase in Aids- related deaths unless sustained food assistance is made readily available in these countries.”

From the above discussions, the study indicated that conjunctural deprivation could be caused by individuals such as wars and ineffective economic policies formulated by tyrants like the Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe when he grabbed farms from the

commercial farmers. The conjunctural deprivation can also be caused naturally by drought for example, and yet it can be caused by the outbreak of diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

Poverty as a social problem is a concept which is conceptualized through the discussion of the different forms of deprivation, namely: absolute deprivation, relative deprivation, cultural deprivation and conjunctural deprivation.

When poverty is conceptualized as a social problem through different forms of deprivation, it could be mentioned that people are poor because they earn certain incomes which are regarded as falling below the poverty datum line earned by other members of the communities (absolute deprivation/ poverty), they are classified as belonging to a certain class, namely the lower class (relative deprivation/ poverty), they command certain living standards which differ and violate the living standards of the entire society (cultural deprivation/ poverty), and that they are poor because they happened to be victims of crisis caused by fellow-men who caused the political instability in their societies, and or the natural causes such as drought, floods, earthquakes and fires (conjunctural deprivation/ poverty). Deprivation is therefore a manner in which we classify other by comparing their material resources with ours. It is how we classify them into occupational classes, it is how we stigmatize their social environments for not belonging to ours and is the natural and human factors which can declares all people poor.

In order to explain and understand poverty as a social problem or phenomenon, it is also important to consider its different theoretical perspectives which will be discussed in the following section.

## **2.5. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OF POVERTY**

Poverty is a complex phenomenon which is difficult to understand through its definition and conceptualization only. It is well explained if it is discussed as a condition of deprivation. It can also be discussed through other levels such as its causes. All these dimensions cannot wholly explain. There is fortunately yet another effective dimension for seeking to understand and describe poverty as a social problem, namely



through its theoretical perspectives.

The theoretical perspectives are tools which social scientists utilize to explain phenomena that are not very well understood and that they are also utilized to organize and predict the relationship between variables of the phenomena. "Theory frames how we look at and think about a topic. It gives us concepts, provides basic assumptions, directs us to the important questions, and suggests ways for us to make sense of data" (Neuman, 2000:60). For Mouton and Marais (1990:125), a theoretical perspective is an analytical tool by means of which the social scientists are able to make sense of the phenomenon that is being investigated.

Theoretical perspectives of poverty as a social problem are therefore concepts of utmost importance for this study because they enable the researcher to explain poverty from diverse angles. Theoretical perspectives minimize the complexity for understanding and describing poverty as a social problem. In this study, the researcher elected to utilize the three perspectives of poverty which are utilized in the social work profession and were contributed by Weeks (1999), namely: the individualist perspective, the reformist perspective, and the structuralist perspective.

### **2.5.1. THE INDIVIDUALISTIC PERSPECTIVE**

The first theoretical perspective to explain poverty as a social problem is the individualistic perspective.

Weeks (1992:314) explains that the individualistic perspective minimises the significance of social factors in causing problems. According to this perspective, problems are viewed as originating from factors within individuals or small groups.

This perspective describes that poverty is caused by individuals' lack of power to do something about their predicament. It therefore places the blame of poverty on the poor themselves in that they are unable to delay their immediate gratification, they have a kind of culture which will continue to be transmitted from one generation to the next and that if the poor were given an opportunity to advance, they usually destroy that opportunity

through the utilization of drugs, the consumption of large amount of alcohol and committing crime (Lauer, 1992:213).

The individualistic perspective is also known as the functionalist perspective as motivated by Ritzer (1988:202) who says it seeks to explain that social problems are caused by people because of their need to satisfy immediate gratification.

The functionalist/ individualistic perspective maintains that poverty is necessary for the survival of a society. This view maintains that every social class in the society should be represented because classes complement one another, for example, a miner is as important in extracting mineral resources as an undertaker is in burying those who have died. Goodman (1995:115) admits that "when people in those different categories are ranked in some hierarchical order that gives them differing access to social resources, the result is social stratification." It is true that in societies throughout the continent, people are ranked according to wealth, power and prestige.

Society functions well when these groupings or classes are available because it would be difficult, for example, to be in a society without bakers, undertakers, doctors, psychologists, miners, and others.

The poor have a function to the survival of society. Sullivan and Thompson (1994:176-177) listed the functions of the poor according to the individualistic/functionalist perspective as dirty work, menial job for the affluent, social practitioners and cheap goods.

- **Dirty work**

The poor perform dirty work for the social system. A position here is that society needs individuals who will perform the domestic and janitorial work which cannot be performed by those who hold higher educational qualifications and earning high incomes.

- **Menial job for the affluent**

The poor do domestic work for the affluent who on the other hand, are engaged into rendering professional work for the community. Torres, Bhorat, Leibbrandt and Cassim (2000:78) extend that the private, community and domestic services comprise largely domestic services and other services for households which are mostly performed by women and the poor, and are informal and low paying in nature.

- **Social Practitioners**

Poverty is necessary so that social practitioners such as the social workers and psychologists can be usefully engaged in helping them. Gilbert, Specht and Terrell (1993:136) support that “ although services are offered to the entire community, a disproportionate segment of the population in need comes from the lower socio-economic classes.” The poor are more in need of social welfare services than the rich. In this context, the social practitioners are seen as assisting the poor.

- **Cheap goods**

Poverty makes it possible for cheap goods and commodities which are available in the communities to be utilized by the poor. The rich are not visible if the poor are not present. " The poor help to support and symbolize the status of the non-poor by serving as the official "losers" or "underdogs" in the societal race for success" (Sullivan & Thompson, 1994:177).

There is no classless society and as a consequence, the poor are just as important as their counterparts, the rich.

The above functions of the poor asset that the poor perform positive tasks for other groups in the society. The poor assist others, and according to Ritzer (1988:151), they have the right to receive assistance from government for their support to the continuity of the social system. Society should assist the poor and suppress their possible mobilization against the social system.

In order to eliminate poverty through an individualistic perspective, social practitioners should utilize the grassroots mobilization and citizen participation which “is expected to improve the quality of planning, to make programmes responsive to the desires and preferences of local residents, to reduce alienation, enhance the power of the low classes, improve communication between government and the people, encourage moderation and responsibility among the residents” (Vasoo, 1991:1).

## **2.5. 2. REFORMIST PERSPECTIVE**

The second perspective to discuss poverty as a social problem is the reformist perspective.

The reformist perspective views poverty as a product of environmental factors which exclude individuals or communities from the socio-economic, cultural and political resources of the society. According to this perspective, people are poor because their environments predispose them to poverty. This is like when communities living in countries such as Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia which are characterized by wars become poor simply because their environments do not have any development programmes in place except the programmes for warring.

According to Weeks (1999:315), the reformist perspective “recognises the causative influence of social factors on social problems and allows for the formulation of state policy to address the social causes.”

According to Popenoe, Boulton and Cunningham (1998:328), the reformist perspective is an effective rallying point through which adherents from all walks of life could be drawn and be motivated to challenge the social change which is regarded as causing social problems.

People will be poor if their socio-economic and political environments are not in accord with the democratic requirement of their communities.

In this regard, social problems are evident in the communities for the mere reason that the socio-economic and political policies indirectly encouraged the development of those

problems. In South Africa, for example, poverty is available because policies of the former apartheid government have excluded the majority of the citizens from participating in the socio-economic, political and cultural mainstream development of the country.

Weeks (1999:316) believes that the environmental factors could be addressed if the institutional collectivist approach is utilized. According to him, this approach is being applied in South Africa today through the RDP's mobilization of both the governmental and non-governmental institutions, the business sector, churches and the foreign communities towards a common goal of fighting poverty. The RDP is a social policy which is developed specifically to reform South Africa.

### **2.5.3. STRUCTURALIST PERSPECTIVE**

The third perspective to discuss poverty as a social problem is the structuralist perspective.

The structuralist perspective has two different camps, namely: the Marxist or socialist camp and capitalist camp.

The Marxist view “ regards social problems as the results of the workings of that particular form of society and that it is impossible to resolve social problems without a change in the nature of that society” (Weeks, 1999:315). The Marxist approach explains poverty by viewing society "as involving a constant struggle between social classes over scarce resources, with some groups managing to capture more of these resources than others" (Sullivan & Thompson, 1994:177).

According to the Marxist view, the social welfare system is a way of regulating and controlling the distribution of wealth. Gilbert, Specht and Terrell (1993:16) state that because in the Western countries the majority are poor, social welfare is therefore “ the handmaiden of capitalist, a mechanism to pacify the working class and keep it subservient.”

To the Marxist school of thoughts, the capitalist system makes policies which are

oppressive towards other communities, because the elite get richer on the exploitation of the poor. The poor are the producers of the commodities but their labour which produces those commodities is paid less in order for the capitalist to make profit. The capitalists view, on the other hand, disclaims that and views poverty as a man-made and personal problem, and therefore does not call for collective action. The proponents of the capitalist view specify that "poverty is caused by one's not having worked hard enough. Being poor, then, is one's own fault" (Sullivan & Thompson, 1994:178). In this way, the poor have available abundant resources and are apathetic in utilizing them to meet their survival needs. The poor are lazy, helpless and have lowered self-esteem.

Kelso (1994:12) submits that "unless the poor are constantly encouraged, cajoled, or even required to become self-sufficient, the danger exists that the poor will become resigned to becoming permanent wards of the state."

Weeks (1999:315) contends that to solve poverty as a social problem, there should be strategies in place to address the individual needs. This is in accord with the capitalist view, who contend that problems of this nature are solved through the active involvement of the poor to improve their own life.

The explanation of poverty from the individualistic, reformist and the structuralist perspectives suggests that there is no single perspective which can successfully explain poverty as a social problem. Those who seek to explain poverty, are compelled to utilize different perspectives so that at the end they are able to develop different strategies to solve the problem.

To develop strategies to solve the problem of poverty, it is however also important to understand the causes and effects of poverty as discussed in the following section.

## **2.6. CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF POVERTY**

Cause and effect are relational concepts in the sense that the former is an independent variable whilst the latter is a dependent variable. Neuman (2000:127) maintains that "conditions that act on something else, is the independent variable. The variable that is

the effect or is the result or outcome of another variable is the dependent variable.” In this context, the independent variable has an influence upon the dependent variable. “In other words, the values that the dependent variable takes on are influenced by the independent variable” (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001:46). In order to explain the relationship between the cause and effect in more detail, Chambers (2000:15) says that a cause is something that comes before the event and is said to have caused it, whilst effect on the other hand, is a consequence.

In this section, the researcher discusses the causes of poverty, namely:

- resource deficiency,
- individualistic deficiency and
- institutional deficiency.

The effects of poverty will be discussed through different environments which interact with individuals and communities, namely:

- psychological/ physical environment
- natural/ social environment
- economic environment
- political environment and
- cultural environment.

The researcher selected only the effects of poverty which are related to the PRP, namely; the sick, women, children, the elder, the disabled, prostitutes, the employed and the working poor, people under welfare, domestic violence and street children.

### **2.6.1. CAUSES OF POVERTY**

In this section, the researcher will utilize a social work guideline which was contributed by Gilbert, Specht and Terrell (1993) who suggest that causes of poverty must be grouped into three categories, namely: resource deficiency, individual deficiency and institutional deficiency.

#### **2.6.1.1. RESOURCE DEFICIENCY**

The first cause of poverty is resource deficiency. Gilbert, Specht and Terrell (1993:115) stated that “a lack of resources such as health care and adequate housing is a primary characteristic of poverty and also a factor contributing to its development and perpetuation.” Resource deficiency causes poverty within communities only when government and other nongovernmental institutions fail to provide them with public assistance, community mental health, social services and employment.

Resource deficiency is when the stipulated objectives of the welfare programmes are not met due to some other factors such as shortage of funds, infrastructure and administrative staff. It is therefore addressed through the availability of funds, infrastructure and administrative staff. For example, when a resource in the form of the Medicaid was made available to the American society, then Medicaid is the major mechanism for financing health and long-term care for the poor in the United States (Schneider, 1999:195).

In the South African context, for example, forms of resources are the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) and the Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) programmes.

The shortage, inadequacy, absence or deficiency of resources result in the effects of poverty in communities.

#### **2.6.1.2. INDIVIDUAL DEFICIENCY**

The second cause of poverty is individual deficiency and it means that poverty is caused by the norms, values and culture of the poor.

To Gilbert et al. (1993:116), individual deficiency is not a biological factor but rather link with the values, norms and behaviors of the poor who are at fault. In this regard,



the cause of poverty is a result of individuals, families and communities who project unwanted behaviours towards their development.

According to Budlender (1997:521), social capital underlines the importance of social and community relations, norms, and values that hold society together. The poor have their own values, norms and behaviors which differ from those of the entire social system. The poor fail to pursue education, they are lazy to work, they abuse drugs and alcohol, they commit crime and their families are usually very large. This nature of their lives predisposes them to more stresses which are associated with poverty. The poor live in a state of disharmony, and according to this view, there will be peace if they can adapt to the norms and values of the entire social mainstream.

### **2.6.1.3. INSTITUTIONAL DEFICIENCY**

The third cause of poverty as a social problem is institutional deficiency. Institutional deficiency means that it is government's institutional and policy make-up which encourage the development of poverty in communities.

“The basic assumption here is that social welfare institutions not only fail to function properly but also operate in ways that sustain poverty” (Gilbert, Specht & Terrell, 1993:116).

Institutional deficiency is an external phenomenon through which “institutions are now experienced as possessing a reality of their own, a reality that confronts the individual as an external and coercive fact” (Ritzer, 1988:348).

Government institutions which are delegated tasks of formulating, implementing and evaluating social policies are according to the institutional deficiency the causes of poverty, identified as the major contributor to the problem. The institutional deficiency can do more harm of promoting poverty within communities than individual deficiency.

### **Conclusion**

The researcher has so far discussed the causes of poverty which were categorized

into three classes, namely: the resources deficiency, individual deficiency and institutional deficiency. According to the resource deficiency, poverty is caused by the inavailability of resources for the day-to-day existence of individuals and communities. The shortage of amenities such as food, shelter and health care services predisposes individuals and communities to high incidence of poverty. The individual deficiency, on the other hand, maintains that people become poor due to their way of life, this being their standard of living. The institutional deficiency maintains that poverty is caused by the failure of governmental and nongovernmental institutions in adequately formulating, implementing and evaluating policies and programmes to improve the qualities of lives of individuals and communities. When the resources deficiency, individual deficiency and institutional deficiency were not met, people and communities become poor. The causes in this regard are the independent variables in that they cause poverty. Poverty is a result of the cause and is thus a dependent variable.

Poverty is a complex entity which cannot be viewed through a single incident in the socio-economic, political and cultural lives of people. Along this backdrop, the researcher will discuss the effects of poverty through a number of observable and quantifiable dimensions, known as environments.

### **2.6.2. EFFECTS OF POVERTY**

Even when the causes of poverty were classified into the resources deficiency, individual deficiency and institutional deficiency in order to explain it as a social problem, there is still a necessity to discuss its effects on the individuals and communities. The effects of poverty on the individuals and communities are so complex it become difficult to identify them on single incidents on the socio-economic, political and cultural lives of the individuals and communities. In this context, the researcher will discuss the effects of poverty through the observable and quantifiable dimensions of the individuals and communities, hereby regarded as their environments.

“External influences, or environmental influences come from people’s experiences with the world outside the self” (Papalia & Olds, 1992:8). An interaction between an individual and own environment is called ecology which Lombard (1991:14) maintains is “ a science which studies the relationships between organisms and their environment

and which describes, analyses and evaluates the underlying interaction which occurs between organisms and their environment.” In this context, the researcher is of the opinion that the different environments could be successfully utilized to explain the effects of poverty on the individuals and communities. The different environments of individuals and communities are entities which this study utilized in order to accurately observe and quantify the incidence of poverty.

When poverty affects individuals and communities, it becomes evident through their environments which are observable and quantifiable. Social work practice has developed different environments as dimensions through which the effects of poverty on individuals and communities could be measured. These environments were contributed by Swanepoel (1992) and are as follows: psychological environment, natural/social environment, economical environment, political environment and cultural environment.

Swanepoel (1992:25) says “the environmental aspects on all the above-mentioned levels may be experienced by the community worker as constraints.”

Stewart (1992:124) defines effect as “ assessing the impact” and explains that it is largely a matter of researching. For this author, effects on an agency, for example, could be measured in terms of changes in a number of clients and the expenditure incurred. According to Schram and Soss (1999:93-97), for example, effect means the measurement of say the migration of welfare recipients from the rural areas to the cities.

Effects are therefore obtainable through the measurement of the conditions of individuals and communities before and after the outbreak of poverty in their environments.

#### **2.6.2.1. PSYCHOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT**

The first individual and community environment through which the researcher discussed the effects of poverty is the psychological environment.

According to Swanepoel (1992:30), the psychological environment is not easily

observable and measurable. When people are subjected to unpopular environments, their physical and psychological well-beings are retarded.

“Unpredictable events affecting our physical selves, such as injury-producing accidents and diseases, with possible consequent pain and infirmity, strike all of us from time to time and upset our normal equilibrium” (Carson, Butcher & Coleman, 1988:102). The effects of poverty are therefore observable and quantifiable through looking at the psychological and physical states of individuals and communities and determine what has occurred overtime. In this context, the researcher selected to discuss the psychological and physical environments of the sick in order to delineate the effect of poverty them.

- **THE SICK**

In South Africa, people in the rural areas are more prone of being affected by diseases such as tuberculosis, measles, malaria, cholera and typhoid because of the inavailability of the health care facilities in their environments.

May, Woolard and Klasen (2000:37) agree by suggesting that although the rich were found to be of poor health as compared to the poor, the poor themselves suffer a great deal of illness such as tuberculosis, diarrhoea, fever and malnutrition. Poor health is noticeable through the high level of infant mortality rates, unequal distribution of health care services and the exclusion of communities from political control over health care matters.

The poor have no access to clean piped water, adequate healthy foods, housing, sanitation, and the poor cannot afford to pay for the private medical aid insurance. The poor are more probably affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic than the rich, this being because they lack of nutritional food in their bodies.

Marcus (2000:17) has noted that “an estimated 13 million Africans have died in the two decades since the start of the epidemic and 23 million people or 70 per cent of all adults and children presently living with HIV are found in this region.” LoveLife (2001:4) supports by saying that “Sub-Saharan is the worst affected region, having around 70% of the global total of HIV-positive people.” When the Sub-Saharan region suffers from the

epidemic, South Africans are also affected. This is due to the relaxed South African immigration policies which allow aliens to enter and leave the country as they wish without being seriously prosecuted.

The number of people affected by the HIV/AIDS disease is increasing by day (Shevel, 2002:6). The number of people affected with HIV/AIDS in South Africa will continue to rise at an alarming rate. *South African Yearbook* (2000:455) has depicted the seriousness of this situation by stating that “nearly four million South Africans are infected and living with the disease, with an estimated 1500 infections taking place daily.”

An investigation on the psychological and physical environments of individuals and communities in the South African context provides this study with yet another dimension of poverty as a social problem, namely: an increase of orphans and the emergence of the child-headed family due to the advent of HIV/AIDS.

South African government and non-governmental organizations are concerned that this increase in HIV/AIDS victims will automatically mean an increase in the number of orphans. “Orphans are perhaps the most tragic and long-term legacy of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Caring for them is one of the greatest challenges facing South Africa.” These children will grow as street children, being delinquent or they will form the child-only families and will live a traumatized life after the long illness and death of parents (LoveLife, 2001:10-11). The outbreak of HIV/AIDS in South Africa does not only mean waiting for death of those affected, it also means the procreation of a society which is infested with all forms of social ills, the increase in the number of those affected, increased government spending and the crippling of the socio-economic, political and cultural standing of the society.

Government should conduct HIV/AIDS effective awareness campaigns throughout the poor communities. This requirement is reported to have been satisfied because an intersectoral collaboration between local, provincial and national government departments, the RDP, the communities and the district health committees has been established to address problems of HIV/AIDS (Hambridge, 1995:3). The Minister of the Department of Social Development, Zola Skweyiya reported that his department has

mobilized communities, traditional leaders, churches and NGOs towards making people more aware of the catastrophic proportions of HIV/AIDS (Laurence, 2001:17-18).

This venture will be effective in addressing the problem of this disease only if the government becomes more supportive to its programmes. But yet, De Lille (2000:21) has noted a limitation when she wrote that “the HIV/AIDS epidemic still remains a non-issue in the eyes of SA’s President.” This concern is most distressing to those who are affected by the disease and who are waiting for government to supply them with antiretroviral drugs.

#### **2.6.2.2. NATURAL/SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT**

The second individual and community environment through which the researcher discussed the effects of poverty on individuals and communities is their natural/social environment.

The researcher selected to discuss both the natural and social environments together because this study is about the evaluation of a social programme with an aim of improving its effectiveness in developing the environments in which individuals and communities live.

Natural/ social environment consists of people who live in a geographic physical area. This environment is composed of human component which Lombard (1992:15) maintains is the social structure and the interaction between individuals and their immediate organizations. According to Swanepoel (1992:25-26), the natural environment explains the availability of resources, whilst on the other hand, the social environment is about how society is stratified. This means that the weakest sectors of the communities receive lesser resources than the most powerful ones.

The effects of poverty on individuals and communities can easily be observable and quantifiable through the investigation on the natural/ social environment of the women, children, the elderly and the disabled.

- **WOMEN**

It has been stated earlier in the introduction of this chapter that poverty in South Africa affects people according to their sexual orientation. In Figure 2.1, the researcher reflected that poverty was during 1995 highly concentrated on women in all the South African races, namely: blacks, coloureds, asians and whites with 50%, 28%, 24% and 9%, respectively (Popenoe, Boulton & Cunningham, 1998:378). This is so because women have a lesser opportunity to pursue education than men, they have an obligatory task of caring for children and the households and that they were oppressed by the previous socio-economic, political and cultural dispensation of the country.

Although the oppression of women is being corrected by the current legislation such as for example, the *Commission on Gender Equality Act*, No. 39 of 1996 and *Employment Equity Act*, No. 55 of 1998, the poor status of women in South Africa has not improved. This has been noted by LoveLife (2001:10) which states that women are more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts and that their unemployment rate is still far higher than that of men.

Sullivan and Thompson (1994:170) write that a development that has been viewed with some alarm in recent years is what has been labeled the "feminization of poverty," referring to the growing number of women among the poor. Indeed the feminization of poverty is a concept which is known by Wells (2001:126) who contends that "women are overrepresented among the country's poor." The first reason behind the feminization of poverty is that women carry a burden of taking care of themselves, their own children, their parents and other relatives in their families. The second reason behind the feminization of poverty is that the female-headed family is growing among black population both in South Africa and abroad because "black women are less likely to get married, more likely to get divorced, and of those who do get divorced, fewer are inclined to remarry than their white counterparts" (Kelso, 1994:96).

Women need to be empowered, they should be educated and trained and they should be afforded opportunities for well-paying jobs in order to emancipate them from the harsh conditions of poverty.

- **CHILDREN**

Children are another sector of the social system which is physically, mentally and socially incapable of competing for the societal scarce resources for existence.

The *National Social Welfare and Development Plan* (1994:55) reports that “ it is estimated that of the total population of youth under 19 years, 78% are under 15 years of age and the majority of these are children who live in the rural wastelands where the levels of poverty of all sorts are extreme.”

Children could be saved from poverty only if government enhances their accessibility towards education and other forms of social grants. Children learn better when they have eaten. Children from the poor households who did not have their breakfast will find it difficult to concentrate on school activities when hungry. Fortunately in the South African context today, there is a programme in place to meet their nutritional requirements which is called the Primary School Nutritional Programme. In this regard poor children are enabled to receive both educational and nutritional requirements.

- **THE ELDERLY**

It is apparent that the older we become the less physically, mentally and socially we become, and thus this condition renders us being incapable of taking care of ourselves and our significant others. This is to mean that the more older people become, the more closely they resemble children and the disabled. The elderly are therefore another sector of the community which is weak to effectively compete for the scarce resources and as such, this condition predisposes them to poverty.

Old age is growing by day and it becomes part of poverty because it is associated with a drop in income and a drastically change of lifestyle.

The aged according to Giddens (2001:165), "face a combination of physical, emotional and material problems that can be difficult to negotiate." The author goes on to view ageism as discrimination against people on the basis of their age, and that it "is an



ideology just as sexism and racism are" (Giddens, 2001:166). For Walker (1992:89), "the high incidence of poverty and low incomes among elderly people is reflected in other measures of discrimination."

In South Africa today, the social welfare system is so effective that there are few elderly who are marginalized from receiving their old age grants. Aging becomes an effect of poverty when the aged are compelled to use their monthly pension to provide for other members of their families such as own children, grandchildren and other members of the extended family who do not work.

- **THE DISABLED**

According to this study, the effect of poverty on individuals and communities is observable and measurable when we investigate the natural/social environment of the disabled.

The disabled are individuals who are unable, due to their physical, mental and emotional deficiencies, to work for themselves.

*Infrastructure Report* (2000:27) defines the disabled as "people with physical or intellectual disabilities which render them unable to work and support themselves."

Ka'Nkosi (2002:4) add that "the code defines disability as any form of physical or mental impairment in the long term, or recurrence patterns that substantially limit an individual's prospect of entry and advancement in employment."

In South Africa, a number of the disabled persons is increasing as reported by Budlender (2000:130) who maintains that "about 5% of all South Africans are disabled, with older people more affected than younger, and serious eye disability being the most common form." The *South African Yearbook* (2000:455) supports by adding that "according to the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, between five and 12% of the South African population are moderately to severely disabled."

The disabled are poor because the socio-economic and political policies within the

society are discriminatory against them. New policies intended to protect the disabled should be put in place. In a response to protect the disabled within the South African context, the Minister of Labour launched the Code of Good Practice on the Employment of People with Disabilities on the 19<sup>th</sup> August 2002 which “sought to regulate the protection of people with disabilities in the workplace and open opportunities for businesses to employ more disabled people” (Ka’Nkosi, 2002:4). Indeed because this code is enforceable, South Africa will see a society which treats its disabled with dignity and overcome their poverty status by connecting them with employment opportunities countrywide.

The natural/ social environment is about the availability of resources necessary for the day-to-day existence of individuals and communities and that these resources are distributed along the power, that is, the weaker sectors of communities gain less resources than the powerful ones. The researcher has discussed the effects of poverty on individuals and communities through the observation and quantification of the natural/ social environments of the women, children, the elderly and the disabled. These categories were identified as weaker than other sectors of the communities because they are incapable of actively competing for the scarce socio-economic, political and cultural resources for their own survival.

### **2.6.2.3. ECONOMICAL ENVIRONMENT**

The third effect of poverty on individuals and communities is discussed through their economical environment.

The economical environment is an important determinant of the type of a living condition of individuals and communities. “Aspects such as the availability of money, the level of deprivation of the people concerned, and the level of vitality of the internal economic system are important considerations for any project” (Swanepoel, 1992:28). “Economic difficulties and unemployment have repeatedly been implicated as factors that enhance vulnerability and therefore lead to elevated rates of abnormal behavior” (Carson, Butcher & Coleman, 1988:131).

People who are economically deprived have a high probability of becoming poor.

There are quite a number of effects of poverty on individuals and communities which are available in the study of poverty as a social problem. In this regard, the researcher selected to discuss the economical environments of the prostitutes and the unemployed and the working poor in order to observe and measure the effects of poverty.

- **PROSTITUTES**

The economical environment of prostitutes is observed and measured in order to explain the effects of poverty on individuals and communities. Prostitution is a process through which individuals who were probably raised in the poor family backgrounds, obtain money and other socio-economic resources in exchange with sex.

It is a fact that most prostitutes are coming from the poor family backgrounds and that they practice their profession as a means of obtaining money for survival (Carson, Butcher & Coleman, 1988:505).

Prostitution can be defined as "the granting of sexual favours for monetary gain" (Giddens, 2001:133). Prostitutes and their clients are not intimately related and as such the women are treated as exotic objects by men. According to Curran & Renzetti (1996:371-372), "prostitution is closely related to drugging and it offers greater financial gains than other petty offences."

If there has been enough job opportunities accompanied by competent economy in South Africa, the researcher believes prostitution could have been minimized. An increase in prostitution is therefore determined by an increase in poverty.

Giddens (2001:136) stated a factor which leads to prostitution as "it might seem that men simply have stronger, or more persistent sexual need than women, and therefore require the outlets that prostitution provide." In this way, it means there would be no prostitution if there were no clients for the prostitutes. Men's permissive behavior exuberates the effect.

Prostitutes make money through selling their bodies and they are also at high risk of being contaminated with diseases such as HIV/AIDS and sexual transmitted diseases,

and of being emotionally, socially and physically abused.

Prostitution can be addressed through an individual change and the supportive to change by the welfare bureaucracy (Nathan, 1999:131). The institutional deficiency element of this intervention will be discussed in detail when the researcher explain the objective of the PRP which is aimed at addressing the rehabilitation of criminals and prostitutes in the succeeding chapter.

Another effect of poverty which is discussed through the economical environment of individuals and communities is the condition of the unemployed and the working poor.

- **THE UNEMPLOYED AND THE WORKING POOR**

The effect of poverty on individuals and communities is observed and measured through the economical environment of the unemployed and the working poor in this part.

Poverty is a twin brother of unemployment and the lack of the latter opens gates for backwardness in the society. Carson, Butcher and Coleman (1988:131) maintain that unemployment hits individuals hard by putting them at the bottom of the social ladder where they will suffer all forms of pain and exclusion. De Lille (2000:21) writes that South Africa is sitting on a time bomb because “ this untenable situation stems from social crises arising out of accelerated poverty, unemployment, and family and community violence.”

Unemployment is a public enemy in most nations. It is a problem which is concentrated in the rural areas because these areas are unable to absorb the abundant labour force. Unemployment is caused by surplus workforce which is not on demand by the labour market. The South African government has introduced programmes such as the Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMME's), the black economic empowerment (BEE) and the local economic development (LED) as its strategies to create jobs for many who are unemployment.

The other category of people who are trapped into poverty are the working poor,

meaning those who actually work but earn very little incomes.

Even if few employment opportunities in South Africa are available, their remuneration is far below to meet the households requirements, this condition drags the households further into poverty.

Sullivan and Thompson (1994:172) say that "despite common misconceptions, many adults below the official poverty level actually work for a living." This is a group which work but earn very little. This is acknowledged by a statement which says "about a quarter of those officially living in poverty are in work anyway, but earn too little to bring them over the poverty threshold" (Giddens, 1993:247).

In this study, the researcher identified the domestic workers as an example of the working poor.

Domestic workers are workers who are employed by families to perform the supportive functions for members who are employed, schooling, ill, in business and travelling. The domestic workers offer support for the family members to run their socio-economic, political and cultural trends outside the households with minimum disturbance by their significant others. Families instead pay the domestic workers very little in return.

There should be policies in place which are intended to protect the incomes of the working poor.

The Department of Labour promulgated the Domestic Worker Sectoral Determination which is aimed at protecting the working conditions and setting the minimum wages of between R480 and R800 for the domestic workers (Ramashia, 2002:19). According to this author who is also the director-general for the department, the department has transferred R120-million "to the Services Sector Education and Training Authority to address the skills gaps of domestic workers." The South African government is surely doing something to improve the condition of the working poor. This strategy should be co-opted with measures intended to discourage the unfair dismissal of the working poor from jobs.

The researcher has discussed the effects of poverty on individuals and communities through the economical environments of the prostitutes and the unemployed and the working poor which he maintained that they are observable and quantifiable.

#### **2.6.2.4. POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT**

The fourth environment which is observed and quantified in order to discuss the effects of poverty on individuals and communities is the political environment.

It should be mentioned here that the political environment of the society is the most important determinant of poverty, because “no development effort stands totally outside of politics” (Swanepoel, 1992:26). When social work practitioners discuss the effects of poverty on individuals and communities through the discussion of their political environment, they concentrate on how individuals are placed in the social system and on how much political influence they wield on each other and the system as a whole. The previous political environment in the South African context provided whites with more power to distribute resources in their own favour, a condition which excluded other racial groups and predisposed them to poverty.

Politicians should develop effective social policies and programmes which will improve the lives of the poor. The researcher selected to discuss the people under welfare as an effect of poverty on individuals and communities.

- **PEOPLE UNDER WELFARE**

People who are under welfare and continue to receive public assistance are mostly poor. The grants they receive are highly minimal as compared to the market related requirements of the current economy and are accompanied by bad bureaucratic process.

People who receive the public assistance grants are means tested so that grants are given to the eligible recipients who earn below the poverty datum line, who are citizens and fall under the categories which are targets of the assistance.

People who receive the social assistance are the aged, disabled, veterans, women with dependent children and children under foster care. Money paid to these categories of persons is according to the *Social Assistance Act* (Act No. 59 of 1992, Chapter 1) termed the grants. Only money paid to the blind is still according to this stipulation called the blind person's pension.

Grants do very little to improve the lives of people, especially in a situation where pensioners share their taking with other members of family who are unemployed. Poverty puts more stress on the people under welfare.

But still some argue that these grants assist in alleviating poverty such as a statement which reads: "for many households, the grants received by one household member are the only means of survival for the whole household" (*Infrastructure Report*, 2000:27).

People under welfare were discussed as an effect of poverty through which the political environment could be observed and quantified.

The researcher will discuss the cultural environment of individuals and communities through the effects of poverty, namely: domestic violence and the street children in the succeeding item.

#### **2.6.2.5. CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT**

The fifth environment which is observed and quantified in order to discuss the effects of poverty on individuals and communities is the cultural environment.

"The cultural environment is perceived as one of the biggest stumbling blocks to development" (Swanepoel, 1992:28). According to Papalia and Olds (1992:405), cultural environment affects our social clocks so that what a sector of the community regards as right and proper, the other sector of that particular community views it as indifferent and against the norms and values of the entire community. Earlier in this chapter, the researcher maintained that the individualistic perspective explains that the poor have their own culture which is characterized by the high incidence of crime, violence and divorce.

The researcher selected to discuss the cultural environments of the domestic violence and street children in order to discuss the effects of poverty on individuals and communities.

- **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

The South African media is full of domestic violence news these days. Domestic violence is spouse battering and could also be accompanied by other forms of women and children physical and sexual abuse.

Most abuse of this nature is found to be taking place within households. Domestic violence was identified as one of the effects of poverty within the South African context. LoveLife (2001:10) notes that women who do not work and are living in the female-headed families have a high level of economic maltreatment and that 13% of them are beaten by their partners.

Miller (2001:108-109) write the following paragraph to explain domestic violence:

One commonly accepted definition of domestic violence might be that domestic violence involves a continuum of behaviors ranging from degrading remarks to cruel jokes and may involve punches and kicks, false imprisonment, sexual abuse, maiming assault, and even homicide. If left unchecked, domestic violence increases in frequency and severity. Victims of domestic violence suffer all forms of abuse, with many of them reporting that the emotional and verbal abuse is as destructive as the physical abuse.

Stanko (1992:187) admits that "behaviour referred to as wife battering- the violent action on the part of husband against wife- includes forms of pushing, kicking, slapping, throwing objects, burning, dragging, stabbing or shooting."

Spousal abuse is mostly in the form of wife- battering, which the husband utilizes as a means to maintain power and control over his wife or woman and sexual abuse.



As was discussed through the individualistic perspective of poverty earlier in this chapter, the poor have their own culture which is characterized by high incidence of crime, violence and divorce, the researcher suggests that spouses who abuse each other are mostly socio-economically low in nature, that is, they are poor and have poor educational background.

Government should formulate policies which are intended to reduce the rate of domestic violence. There is a legislation intended to address domestic violence in South Africa (*Domestic Violence Act* of 1998, Act No. 119 of 1998).

Parents in the poor households are incapable of providing their children with the necessary parenting styles. In this regard, this condition leaves some children with little choice than being the street children.

- **STREET CHILDREN**

When a family, single-headed or complete cannot provide for children's social, economic and cultural needs, due to poverty or death of parents through communicable diseases such as tuberculosis, diarrhoea, fever, cholera and HIV/AIDS, they become delinquent (compare May, Woolard & Klasen, 2000:37; Lovelife, 2001:11.)

Papalia and Olds (1992:362) explain that a delinquent is a young person who is truant, has run away from home and has done something else that is ordinarily not considered criminal - except when done by a minor.

The most represented type of delinquents in South Africa are the street children. Street children are poor in nature. They lack material resources such as shelter and clothing, they lack of hygienic food and that some studies have shown that they are stressful, are anxiety laden, they show emotional regression and that they lack of real connectedness with the environment (May, Woolard & Klasen, 2000:44).

Children who end up being street children were previously emotionally and physically abused by their household members. Some of these children had nothing to eat at home and lack of adequate educational and parental supervision during their developmental

stages. Parents should improve their behavioural patterns when relating with their children. Parents and other significant members of the families should be supportive and loving towards the children.

## **Conclusion**

Poverty is a complex concept to discuss. Social work practitioners have developed a strategy to discuss its effects through a number of environments which interact with individuals and communities. These environments are observable and quantifiable and are as follows: psychological/ physical environment, natural/ social environment, economic environment, political environment and cultural environment.

Immediately after becoming observable and measurable, the environments of individuals and communities can be effectively manipulated in order to improve the lives of the poor. In other words, social work practitioners are able to develop strategies intended to improve the qualities of life for the poor through the interventions on these environments. These strategies will be discussed in the succeeding section.

## **2.7. STRATEGIES FOR ELIMINATING POVERTY**

The environments mentioned above are entities which social work practitioners should observe and measure in order to be able to report whether the effects of poverty are present in the communities. This information will enable practitioners to develop effective strategies for eliminating poverty. In this section, the researcher discusses the effective strategies for eliminating poverty.

Ritzer (1988:256) says “strategic action involves two or more individuals coordinating purposive-rational action in the pursuit of a goal.” According to Lombard (1991:126), a strategy is a predetermined comprehensive course of action to be taken in order to attain a specific goal or aim.

A strategy therefore is a well-planned action which has been developed and identified as most effective in reducing a phenomenon. Strategies are aimed at attacking parts of the phenomenon and their achievement is the reduction or amelioration of that problem.

This section discusses the strategies for eliminating poverty as a social problem, namely:

- education and training,
- entrepreneurial opportunities,
- redistribution of resources,
- infrastructure development,
- improvement of the poor's standard of living,
- government's involvement,
- competent economy,
- full employment,
- community revitalization programmes and
- social security programmes.

### **2.7.1. EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Most people who have poor educational and training background, have a probability of being poor. This is because education has an advantage of promoting self-support in communities, and without it, communities become dependent and apathetic (Caputo, 1995:15).

Kelso (1994:49) asserts that "if poverty was a result of too many individuals being ill-prepared and unqualified for the demands of the job market, the obvious solution to the problem was to improve their educational skills."

Government through its institutions should make sure that the poor receive adequate education and training which is job-related and will enable them to secure good-paying jobs.

In South Africa, the government has introduced the Adult Basic Education and Training Programme (ABET) which enables the governmental departments to establish public centres wherein the previously disadvantaged groups are afforded an opportunity to be educated and trained. These centres are funded by government in accordance with the

stipulation of the *Adult Basic Education Act* (Act, No. 52 of 2000 Section 21(1)) which promulgates that "the Member of the Executive Council must from money appropriated for this purpose by the provincial legislature fund public adult basic education and training on a fair, equitable and transparent basis." This process makes it possible for education and training to be easily accessible to the disadvantaged groups, thereby reducing the high levels of illiteracy and poverty.

The ABET programme in South Africa is reported to have achieved more than it was targeted for during 1999 when it increased the quality of provisioning and delivery, and "reached 300 000 ABET learners, whereas the target set in the MYIP was 177 000 learners" (*South Africa Yearbook*, 2001:439). MYIP stands for Multiyear Implementation Plan.

## **2.7.2. ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES**

A second important strategy for eliminating poverty is to develop opportunities for small and medium entrepreneurial in order to enable the poor to climb the ladder out of poverty.

The entrepreneurial opportunities can be "well-developed and systematically administered welfare programmes, in conjunction with government policies which actively assist in keeping down unemployment, reduce poverty levels" (Giddens, 1993:247).

In the South African context, Rogerson and Vaughan (2000:231) write that "the national government views the small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) as key instruments for attaining several different objectives- black empowerment, employment generation, income distribution, and the enhancement of competitiveness, particularly of small-scale manufacturing operations."

Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) ensure the increased job opportunities for individuals, groups and or organizations. SMMEs need support from government and nongovernmental organizations in order to sustain. This is included in a statement which says " Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) also stand to benefit in line

with the government's stipulation that partners from the emerging sector must be included in all tender contracts" (Enterprise, 1998:40).

SMMEs have limitations as well. From a South African perspective, Parks Mankahlana noted that the SMMEs are incapable of operating and reducing poverty when he commented that "we are not going to create employment for the underclass by launching big Stalinist parastatals. The tragedy in this country is the people do not have the experience and expertise required to run small businesses" (Haffajee, 2000:36).

The SMMEs strategy is weak in generating employment because entrepreneurs need financial assistance to kick-start their businesses. This assistance is always absent. When people are forced to finance their businesses with the little that they have invested, it is more likely that their businesses will generate few jobs which are of poor standard.

### **2.7.3. REDISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES**

According to May (2000:7), the Poverty and Inequality Report (PIR) has suggested that the most effective tool to fight poverty is to uproot the forces which were brought by the vicious circle of poverty in South Africa and channeling income, wealth and opportunities to people.

Programmes which are within the context of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) are well designed to redistribute resources to the marginalized communities. An example of these programmes is the *Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act of 2000* (Act No. 5 of 2000). According to this act, government tendering contracts will be awarded to the previously disadvantaged communities.

Poverty alleviation policy programmes should be designed in such a manner that they will assist communities to escape the stress of poverty whilst at the same time without fostering the cycle of dependency on the part of communities.

#### **2.7.4. INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

An effective way of eliminating poverty is through infrastructural development because during its process, community members will be educated and trained, employed and that they will develop future life skills which will enable them to escape poverty.

During the construction of an infrastructure, there are many activities which take place and involve community participation. The most effective strategy for involving individuals towards development is through citizen participation. Gilbert, Specht and Terrell (1993:133) agree that “ the strategy of citizen participation is aimed at redistributing decision-making power between agencies and clients.”

Government should develop programmes for the infrastructure construction such as buildings, roads, dams and sanitation for the communities to participate in them and thereby developing themselves.

In South Africa, this task has been attributed to the local government organization, namely; the Municipal Infrastructure Investment Framework which "sets basic policy guidelines for investment in infrastructure for water, sanitation, roads, stormwater, energy and solid waste removal infrastructure in disadvantaged areas" (Stavrou, 2000:143).

The strategy for the development of infrastructure in order to eliminate poverty is supported by the researcher for the reason that when infrastructure is being constructed, more people are employed and they are educated and trained as they interact with one another and the project.

#### **2.7.5. IMPROVEMENT OF THE POOR'S STANDARDS OF LIVING**

Lauer (1992:213) maintains that “the poor are not only poorer, they are also probably less happy than the rich, and they depart markedly the less deprived on virtually every measure: behavior, values, morality, personality, interest, aspirations, life styles and the like.”

Popenoe (1995:221) adds that the poor must be blamed for their own misfortune because “ they are lazy to work or because their immoral behavior has resulted in large and often broken families.”

In this view, it means the poor are poor because they want to be poor and that they are not prepared to improve their circumstances. The strategy to eliminate poverty through improving their standard of living is effective since development cannot be taken to the people but rather the people should take active participation into their own development.

In order to eliminate poverty through this strategy, the poor must be motivated to make use of opportunities available to them (Giddens, 1993:277). From a community development point of view, this could be realized through citizen participation which Van Zyl (1995:10) maintains “people (individuals) are to be the main actors in human scale development, with government playing the guiding, enabling and facilitative role.”

The poor should be motivated to change their personal standards of living. They should be for example, encouraged to have smaller families through the application of effective contraception and they should be encouraged to suppress their desire to satisfy their immediate gratification and limit their consumption of substances and alcohol.

#### **2.7.6. GOVERNMENT'S INVOLVEMENT**

In general terms, government is normally the hope for the elimination of poverty in a society.

Kelso (1994:15) suggests a process which government should follow in eliminating poverty, namely: "if the government is making progress in fighting poverty, we need to (1) ask what its objectives are, and (2) decide in light of these objectives what resources, available to low- income individuals, should be counted in determining whether they fall above or below the poverty line." Government should have its main objective therefore, to fight poverty through the available effective methods.

Smelser (1995:197) lists the strategies which the US government used during the President Lyndon Johnson's war to eliminate poverty, namely: "tax cut, manpower

training programs such as CETA, educational programs such as Head Start, and increased welfare payment."

There are programmes which the government can introduce in order to eliminate poverty, such as for example, the PRP, which the researcher intends to evaluate in this study. Government intervention can indeed solve poverty. Giddens (1993:247) gives an example in which government intervention through community development programmes in Sweden has almost completely eliminated poverty.

Since 1994, the South African government through the RDP has mobilized both governmental departments and the non-governmental organizations to fight poverty through different programmes such as the Community Based Public Works Programme, the Community Based Nutrition Programme, the Local Economic Development Programme, the Poverty Relief Programme and others. These programmes have as their main aim to reduce poverty through job-creation. In South Africa, these programmes were not as effective in job-creation as the above mentioned programmes in Sweden. This limitation was captured by a conclusion which states "but there is a growing realisation that there may never again be full employment in South Africa (Popenoe, Boulton & Cunningham, 1998:376).

#### **2.7.7. COMPETENT ECONOMY**

Government should facilitate competent economy in order to eliminate poverty in communities. Kelso (1994:205) maintains that "if the economy turned sour, it would be harder for individuals to work their way out of poverty. We need a healthy economy that can successfully generate an ample supply of jobs."

Poverty in South Africa is severe and it will possibly stay for more years than government has anticipated. Gumede (2001:16) states "both unemployment and poverty in South Africa are structural, and our apartheid past has a great deal to do with it. Local labour, which is largely unskilled, faces a decline in job opportunities as the economy becomes more service- and knowledge- based."

Governments should correct their economic policies in order to wage war against



poverty.

As an example, *Enterprise* (1998:52) notes that the South African government has adopted the Growth, Employment and Distribution (GEAR) strategy in order to create 400 000 non-agricultural new jobs a year. The GEAR will be able to do this through the development of the Spatial Development Initiative and the Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs). This was intended "to open the doors of business to those previously excluded by the apartheid system and to enable them to access such opportunities" (*Enterprise*, 1998:52). A viable economy is able to reduce poverty, but unfortunately a strategy like the GEAR in South Africa is heavily criticized by the left wing within the ANC and its alliance, the SACP and COSATU.

GEAR's main objectives are to downsize government spending on salaries paid to public officials by reducing the workforce and outsourcing the functions to the nongovernmental organizations and the privatization of the state assets. The SACP and COSATU regard GEAR's economic approach as being not represented by the majority South Africans who are poor and that an approach of privatization will lead to more retrenchment and increase unemployment which is already rife within the country (*RDP Development Monitor*, Vol. 7 No. 10, 2001:2).

The researcher is of the opinion that the most effective strategy to eliminate poverty in South Africa can be through the introduction of the basic income grant (BIG) which was rallied by both the SACP and the COSATU, and now recently highly supported by the Democratic Alliance (DA). Through the BIG, poor families should receive a minimum monthly grant which is intended to secure their basic needs. Poor families are according to this approach those families with breadwinners who do not work and or work but earn minimal income.

Limitations of the BIG strategy were identified as (i) there will be a mammoth public expenditure anticipated in the alleviation of poverty which government cannot afford, (ii) the gap between the Africans and Whites recipients of the grants will be difficult to close and (iii) that the basic income grant could induce people to stop working. Borat (2000:796) concludes that "while the state would need to spend about R485 million per

year on White workers in order to keep them out of poverty, the corresponding figure for Africans is exactly 27 times greater.”

### **2.7.8. FULL EMPLOYMENT**

Poor people cannot escape poverty if they are not fully employed. Permanent employment generates a monthly income and other benefits such as unemployment insurance, workman’s compensation, pension, leave gratuities, maternity leave, housing and car subsidy, and other fringe benefits.

Poverty is closely related to unemployment, as supported by Sullivan and Thompson (1994:179-180) who suggest it could be eliminated through full employment which is "a situation in which everyone or nearly everyone who wants to work can find a job."

In this regard, Lauer (1992:206) believes “poverty would cease to exist (or radically reduced) if it were possible for a substantial segment of deprived people to join the ranks of the gainfully employed.”

Poverty alleviation programmes which have the objectives of reducing unemployment are of utmost importance in a fight against poverty and governments should therefore introduce public policies which have the objectives of creating job opportunities for the unemployed.

Kartzen (1993:784) supports this suggestion by concluding that the South African unemployment problem shall be overcome through the implementation of important structural changes which will overcome the low labour absorptive capacity which should be coupled with persistently high inflation.

### **2.7.9. COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION PROGRAMMES**

Community revitalization programmes are known as the community development programmes in South Africa.

Aigner, Flora, Tirmizi and Wilcox (1999) indicate that although the socio-economic

structure of the rural areas in USA was changing, poverty problem was in the increase. They suggested a solution to poverty as the revitalization of the poor communities through the involvement of the members to actively participate in community based programmes. Community development programmes have an advantage of involving everybody in the projects, including those previously marginalized. This is supported by a statement which notes that "by including persons from remote areas and women, people whom previous development projects may have left out, sites open lines of communication and develop relationships across space" (Aigner, Flora, Tirmizi & Wilcox, 1999: 18).

Community-based programmes which follow the stipulations of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action become effective and productive due to the sole reason that they "empower people to maximise their capacities, resources and opportunities towards their own development" (Popenoe, Boulton & Cunningham, 1998:440).

May (2000:6) propose for the active involvement of the poor in programmes that are developed to empower them. Unless the poor themselves do something about their circumstance, the reduction of poverty will become unrealistic.

In South Africa, the RDP was reported to have quite a number of programmes which are designed for community based development. One of these programmes is the Poverty Relief Programme (PRP) which will be discussed later in this study.

#### **2.7.10. SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAMMES**

In order to reduce poverty within communities, government must ensure that the poor are assisted through the provision of some forms of social security programmes.

Haddad and Zeller (1997:125) write that "social security programmes comprise policy and programme instruments such as general food subsidies, targeted income transfers, public works, school feeding, social funds, small-scale credit and emergency feeding programmes which are designed to reduce or prevent poverty."

Within the South African context, social security is meant "to provide many poor households with a regular income which provides a basic level of food security and protection against seasonal and other fluctuations and shocks" (*Infrastructure Report*, 2000:26-27).

Bhorat (2000:799-800) writes that poverty alleviation or reduction is the most serious problem facing South African policy makers today and that cash transfer was found to be the most effective and efficient way of addressing it. This author suggests the provision of the basic income grant to the unemployed will help them to climb the socio-economic ladder "because the unemployed by definition earn no income, they are the poorest in the labour force" (Bhorat, 2000:799-800).

Delivering social security programmes to communities is a governmental obligation because failure to do so poses more risk to it. The poor who are excluded from the socio-economic resources of their environment may pose danger to the society as a whole. This is supported by Tosi (1996: 168) who contends that "more of a problem than the extent of current exclusion would suggest: the population at risk is much larger than that already excluded."

Public assistance programmes to the poor are a must for developed governments. Individuals, groups and organizations representing those who receive public assistance should be given an opportunity to represent them. Active involvement of the poor in articulating their needs and how they should be addressed was highlighted by Kruzynski and Shragge (1999:328) when they explain how the Greater Montreal Anti-Poverty Coordinating Committee (GMAPCC) came into being and operated. This committee for the development of the citizenship for the poor entails "the assertion that there should be basic income entitlement for the poor and that they had a right to speak on their own behalf and have some control over the services that touched their lives" (Kruzynski & Shragge, 1999:328).

Social security fund is money which the departments of Social Development and Health and Welfare have budgeted for the programmes which are intended to assist the qualifying sectors in the communities, namely: the children, youth, the aged, the disabled, drug and alcohol abuse and crime prevention, rehabilitation and restoration.

## 2.8. SUMMARY

In this chapter, the researcher discussed poverty as a social problem through the following:

- Social problems can be conceptualized as problems which affect quite a number of people rather than persons individually and that they could be solved through collective action.
- Poverty was defined as a form of biopsychosocial deprivation or deprivation of material and or non-material conditions. In this context, this study distinguished between the intrinsic deprivation and the extrinsic deprivation. Intrinsic deprivation is concerned with the factors within the individuals and communities which cause poverty whilst extrinsic deprivation concerns the factors outside the control of individuals and communities which cause poverty. Poverty was discussed through the categories of deprivation, namely: economic deprivation, social deprivation and political deprivation and powerlessness. Poverty is a form of deprivation which has types such as the material resources deprivation, mental and emotional deprivation, cognitive deprivation, interpersonal deprivation, opportunity deprivation, personal rights deprivation and physical deprivation. Poverty was further discussed through the four forms of deprivation, namely: absolute deprivation, relative deprivation, cultural deprivation and conjunctural deprivation. Absolute deprivation explains that people are classified as poor because they have minimal resources as compared to those with enough. According to the relative deprivation, people are classified into the lower class, the middle class and the higher class whereas the poor belong to the lower class. The cultural deprivation maintains that people are poor because they belong to the culture of the poor, and finally the conjunctural deprivation explains that people became poor due to human or natural catastrophe such as wars and floods for example, respectively.
- Theoretical perspectives of poverty, namely: the individualistic perspective, reformist perspective and the structuralist perspective were discussed. The individualistic perspective minimises the significance of social factors in causing social problems in

that it emphasizes the factors originating in individuals or small groups and further maintains that the poor are functional to the survival of the society because they perform certain jobs which the rich cannot perform for the society. The reformist perspective sees poverty as a consequence of the socio-economic and political environmental set up of government and its policies. Lastly the structuralist perspective has two opposing camps namely: the Marxist camp which views poverty as caused by the capitalists system which oppresses the labourers (poor) by exploiting their labour in order to make profit which is used to enrich the rich. The capitalist view on the other hand, argues that poverty is caused by the poor themselves due to their mores, norms and values which are indifferent from the societal ones and that they are lazy to work.

- The causes of poverty which are divided into three categories namely: resource deficiency, individualistic deficiency and the institutional deficiency were discussed. According to the resource deficiency, poverty is caused by a lack of some amenities such as education, employment, health care services and infrastructure. The individualistic deficiency maintains that poverty is an internal entity, that is, it is caused by the living standards of the poor. The institutional deficiency maintains that poverty is caused by some environmental factors such as public policies which governmental and nongovernmental organizations formulate and implement in the society.
- The researcher has discussed the effects of poverty. It has been mentioned that the effects of poverty are only observable and quantifiable if social work practitioners conduct the literature and empirical investigations on the different environments which interact with individuals and communities. The environments contributed for this study by Swanepoel (1992) are the psychological/ physical environment, natural/ social environment, economic environment, political environment and cultural environment. The psychological environment was regarded as similar to the physical well-being of the individuals and communities. If this environment is disturbed, people became physically and psychologically incapable. The sick were discussed under this environment. In this study, the researcher selected to treat both the natural and social environments as similar entities, whereby the former entails the shortage of resources and the latter entails how individuals within a

community compete for scarce resources. In this regard, the researcher identified that women, children, the elderly and the disabled are the weakest sectors within communities which are weaker than others to compete for the resources.

The economical environment predisposes individuals and communities to the high incidence of poverty. In the context of this study therefore, the researcher maintained that prostitution and the unemployed and the working poor are the effects of poverty which could be easily observable and quantifiable through the economical environment. The political environment was observed and quantified in order to discuss the effects of poverty, namely the people under welfare. The cultural environment was utilized to explain the effects of poverty, namely: domestic violence and street children. The researcher has reported that the poor have high incidence of crime, violence and divorce rates. In this regard, families of the poor are exposed to domestic violence which include the physical and sexual abuses of women and children. Children grow up to become street children.

- The strategies for eliminating poverty were identified and discussed as education and training, entrepreneurial opportunities, redistribution of resources and infrastructure development, improvement of the poor's standards of living, government's involvement, competent economy, full employment, community revitalization programmes and social security programmes.

The strategies for the elimination of poverty are translated into social policies which are in turn translated into social programmes which can be easily conducted to address the problems facing the communities. It is therefore necessary for the study to concentrate a discussion on both the dimensions of social policy and social programme in order to differentiate between them. Social policy is one of the types of a public policy which is a broad phenomenon and difficult to conduct unless it is translated into social programmes which are easy to implement and evaluate. In the succeeding chapter, the researcher will define and conceptualize both the social policy and the social programmes.