

Poverty and development

Description This section will give a general introduction to poverty and development. It is likely that all participants use these terms already, but they may interpret them in many different ways. This section aims to help participants come to a common understanding of poverty and what they are trying to do in the process of development.

Learning objectives By the end of the section, participants will:

- be aware of the different ways of understanding poverty
- gain their own understanding of poverty
- understand how Tearfund approaches development
- be able to clarify their own approach to development.

Links The understanding here forms the basis of many other sections. The main links are with SECTION A3 (Why advocacy?), SECTION A4 (Good practice in advocacy) and SECTION A5 (Understanding politics and power).

EXERCISE 1 **What is poverty?**



Aim To explore the different dimensions of poverty.

Methods Small groups, plenary discussion, presentation, flash cards

Handouts Definitions of poverty
The deprivation trap

Poverty has many different dimensions. It is vital to understand these dimensions before undertaking any type of development work, including advocacy work.

- Participants write their own definition of poverty on flash cards and stick them to the wall or place them on the floor. Put the cards into groups and lead a discussion, using the handouts to add anything that is missed out.
- Alternatively, present the quotes and definitions from the two handouts and lead participants through a discussion, helping them to challenge their own perceptions and to come to a common understanding of poverty.
- Another way to approach this exercise is to use photographs that represent different aspects of poverty. Participants write down what aspect of poverty they think is shown in each photograph on post-it notes. Discuss their thoughts and use the handouts to reinforce their understanding.

- Key points**
- Ensure that participants understand the different dimensions of poverty.
 - If powerlessness is a problem, then empowerment is central to development.
 - Exploitation is one of the causes of poverty. Tackling the causes of poverty, as well as the effects, is central to tackling poverty itself.

EXERCISE 2 **What is a Christian approach to development?**



Aim To explore a Christian approach to development.

Methods Small-group discussion, plenary discussion, presentation, flash cards, role play

Handout Tearfund's approach to development

The exercise asks: 'What are we trying to do when we work with people to escape poverty? What is a Christian approach to development (integral mission)?' The aim is to turn the negative aspects of poverty into positive aims of development.

- Ask participants to imagine the impact of each aspect of poverty identified in EXERCISE 1 on the person involved and how they might feel. Discuss what must be done in order to change the situation.
- As a group, agree the five most important features or characteristics of integral mission. Participants divide into small groups (2–4 people) and act out each of these features or characteristics as a role play to show what they mean in practice.

- Key points**
- To be effective, integral mission needs to deal with all aspects of poverty and to address the needs of the whole person (spiritual and social as well as economic).
 - Restored relationships (with God, others and the environment) are at the centre of integral mission.
 - Those involved in development work need to have a heart for the poor and to empathise with their situation.
 - Sustainable development means tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. It should be owned and driven by the community. Advocacy work is therefore a part of integral mission.

HANDOUT **Definitions of poverty**

'Poverty is powerlessness. It is about people being unable to meet their basic human needs. Most often this is due to lack of opportunity in a society marked by oppression and injustice which has led to disempowerment. The poor and the non-poor are people created in the image of God, who are designed to grow into mature human beings able to meet their own socioeconomic, personal, social, cultural and spiritual needs. Poverty is powerlessness to fulfil that God-given role.'

Rene Padilla
Kairos, Argentina

'Poverty is experienced by people who are limited in choice. Economic poverty is limited ability to meet basic needs. Spiritual poverty is limited knowledge of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of the world. Poverty dehumanises people, so that they believe that the problems that they face need to be solved by somebody else.'

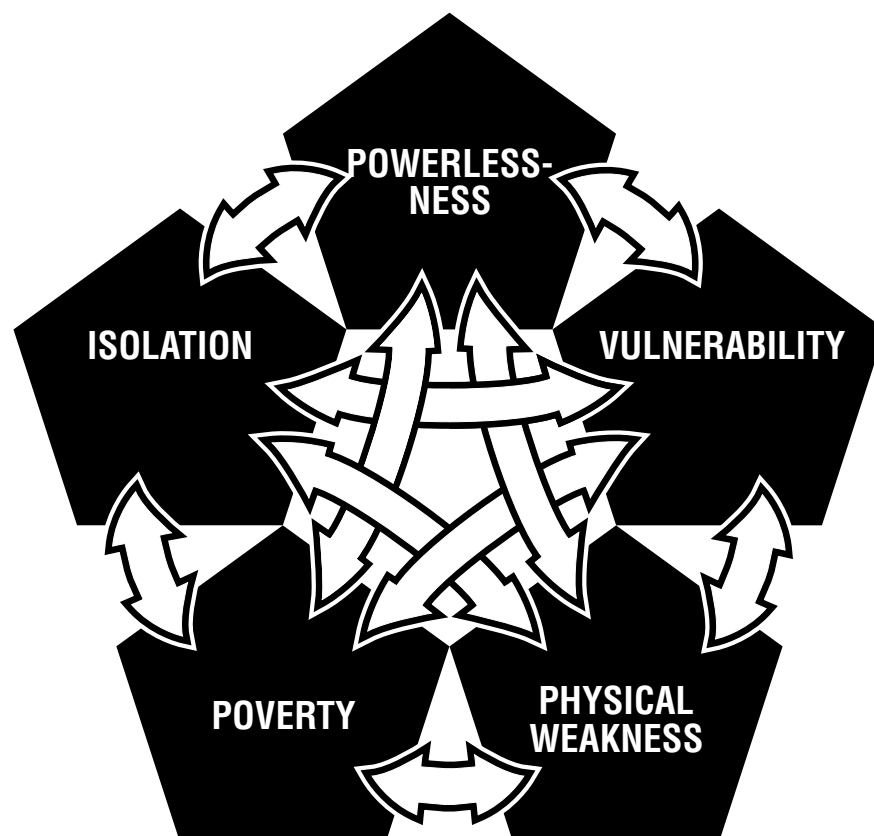
Francis Njoroge
Independent Consultant, Kenya

'Poverty is one of humanity's biggest problems. It is often a result of social corruption, war, physical or economic disaster, or personal irresponsibility. Its underlying cause is sin, usually committed against those affected by it, and not by themselves. It is a painful, fearful, hopeless and vulnerable way of life due to exploitation, isolation, lack of choice and powerlessness.'

Saul Cruz-Ramos
Armonía, Mexico

HANDOUT **The deprivation trap**

Robert Chambers (in his book *Rural Development: putting the last first*) outlines what he calls the 'deprivation trap', in which five 'clusters of disadvantage' interact with each other to trap people in a situation of disadvantage. One of the five clusters is poverty and it is used in the narrow sense of lack of assets. The others are powerlessness, physical weakness, isolation and vulnerability, which are the wider dimensions of poverty. The 'deprivation trap' was designed to represent the rural context, but many of the themes are relevant in any context.



POVERTY: LACK OF ASSETS Small house, little land, few or no livestock. All family members work unless they are too young, old or sick.

PHYSICAL WEAKNESS Adults unable to work due to illness or disability, or migration of active adults.

ISOLATION Household is remote or on the edge of a community, and may lack access to markets or information.

VULNERABILITY Household becomes poorer through having to deal with unforeseen circumstances such as crop failure, accident, sickness, funerals or flooding.

POWERLESSNESS Weak negotiating position with those in control, ignorant of the law, competing for employment.

HANDOUT **Tearfund's approach to development**

(Taken from Tearfund's Operating Principles)

What is integral mission?

- Tearfund believes that the causes of poverty and marginalisation are complex, but that they result from broken relationships. God made the world good, but human rebellion led to exclusion, mistrust, greed and injustice.
- The goal of integral mission is therefore restored relationships with the Creator, with others in the community and with the environment.
- Jesus Christ came to bring this restoration. Through his incarnation, death and resurrection, people are saved from God's condemnation, become part of God's new community and will one day experience the peace and justice of his rule.
- Tearfund's focus is with the economically poor and powerless, but our concern is to see restored relationships in all their fullness, not just economic well being.
- Our responsibility to God is expressed through our response to others.

Priorities in integral mission

THE PRIORITY OF RELATIONSHIPS A desire for good relationships is a goal for all our activities, because good relationships enable us to live interdependently in communities and in the world. Tearfund is therefore committed to working in partnership and co-operation with others.

THE PRIORITY OF THE FUTURE In the future God will establish a new heaven and a new earth. We serve him now in the light of this hope. We want rich and poor to have the hope of a home in this new creation where there is no more death, mourning, crying or pain and where God is present with his people. Reconciliation with God through submission to Jesus Christ is the greatest need of the poor, as with all people. Tearfund is therefore committed to the proclamation of the gospel.

The context of integral mission

PRAYER There is a spiritual reality to development that a secular world-view often ignores. We are engaged in a spiritual conflict and therefore prayer is essential for integral mission. The only way to keep going and see significant change is through the gracious power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

CHURCH AND PARTNERSHIP The church is central to God's saving purpose. It is the community in which God lives by his Spirit. Tearfund is committed to working in partnership with evangelical churches, enabling them to fulfil their ministry to the poor. Partnership expresses the solidarity of Christians reconciled through Christ and builds up local churches.

HANDOUT **Tearfund's approach to development** (continued)**Characteristics of integral mission**

- Compassion and respect for those in need, regardless of their religious beliefs.
- Justice – speaking up on behalf of the powerless and enabling them to speak up for themselves against injustice.
- Character – that the character of Christ should be evident in the way work is done – with righteousness and justice, mercy and peacemaking.
- Cultural sensitivity – recognising that the resources and knowledge of all cultures and communities are valuable.
- Cultural transformation – recognising that no culture is without fault and that gospel values challenge all cultures at some point.
- Mutual accountability, trust and transparency.
- Good leadership that puts others' needs first.
- Empowerment that enables people to make choices, to have a voice and become agents of change.
- Participation so that everyone in the community owns the projects carried out.
- Sustainability – a process of ongoing personal and community change that comes from within the community itself.
- Integration – helping communities to address their different needs through co-operation within the community and with other groups.