

## **A CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF FIGHTING POVERTY THROUGH EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT**

**Mejai B.M. Avoseh,  
The University of South Dakota  
VERMILLION, SOUTH DAKOTA, U.S.A.**

### **Abstract**

The definition and the management of poverty in the age of economic globalization revolve primarily around financial factors. Material poverty is most pervasive and acknowledged because it is generally considered the antonym of wealth. The emphasis on material poverty, especially in the age of globalization, comes at the expense of human poverty that goes far beyond pecuniary aspects.

Education has always been at the forefront of poverty eradication in the contemporary world and in indigenous African understanding of poverty. Participatory development is another important element in the fight against poverty. Using available data, drawing from the literature and some anecdotal observations, the author presents a comparative and conceptual analysis of poverty and its alleviation through education and community efforts in Western and traditional African cultures.

**KEY WORDS:** African, community-education, culture, indigenous, participatory-development, poverty

### **INTRODUCTION**

Poverty is defined in most dictionaries in the material sense of paucity of money, material resources and other means of meaningful existence. In the case of individuals, indices of poverty include lack of income or very low income; lack of education, housing, and food; general state of privation; and lack of basic status symbols in a given community. Governments and countries use international economic criteria to measure poverty. In all cases, however, poverty definition and measurement revolve around financial variables. Material poverty is the most pervasive. The emphasis on material poverty ignores significant aspects of *human* poverty that go beyond the pecuniary aspects.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) incorporates other life-defining elements including literacy education, life expectancy, infant mortality, portable water, affordable health care and a host of other non-financial elements in measuring human poverty. In many traditional African communities, human poverty and wealth are defined in accordance with character traits, morality, religion, and education, participation in kin and community affairs, and industriousness. Material poverty is usually explained as a by-product of the other elements. In the culture of globalization, there is ample evidence in literature to support the argument that a majority of poor populations do not have the means to withstand the brutal competition imposed by globalization and technology. Some third world countries are inclined to link the causes of poverty to injustices and exploitations suffered in the past, especially from foreigners.

Education and participatory development are critical variables to be considered in poverty eradication. Following is a comparative and conceptual analysis of poverty and its alleviation through education and community efforts in Western and traditional African cultures.

## HUMAN POVERTY

Defining poverty in human parameters allows a broader and more realistic understanding of the term. A basic concept of poverty focuses on living below the standard expected in a given community or situation. Low standard of living is often measured in terms of income and purchasing power. Limiting the identification and definition of poverty to monetary and material indices may also lead to a narrow and constricted solution. The economic perspective of poverty was, for a long time, behind the idea that the laws of demand and supply moderated by market forces would spread economic benefits and alleviate poverty through the 'tickle down' effect.

The failure of the economic paradigm was highlighted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which developed the notion of *human development* over and above *economic development*. Within the UNDP paradigm, poverty is a *human* phenomenon and not just economic - it is human poverty. Human poverty implies a lack of human development as well as a threat to humanity. The UNDP thus developed the *Human Poverty Index* (HPI) in 1997. Within the framework of the HPI, "poverty means that opportunities and choices most basic to human development are denied. From a human development perspective, poverty means more than the lack of what is necessary for material well-being" [UNDP 2007/2008]. Human poverty focuses more on deprivation and systemic failure rather than the failures of an individual to amass wealth. The HPI uses "indicators of the most basic dimensions of deprivation: a short life, lack of basic education and lack of access to public and private resources" [UNDP, 2007/2008].

Poverty as a human phenomenon evokes issues of social justice, equity, ecological balance, economic development, and access to democratic participation as well as economic opportunities. It was along this line that the *Gaborone Conference* of 2004 analyzed poverty "broadly as lacking the basic means to live in dignity" [Duke 2004]. A strategy paper on poverty, highlighted at the conference, stated:

...a multidimensional understanding of poverty helps us define poverty as a human condition characterized by sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, economic, political and social rights...[Duke 2004].

Defining and attacking poverty as a human problem helps avoid feminizing, racializing, or regionalizing poverty. The human perspective also provides an opportunity to examine not just the product, but the totality of poverty that may be moral, political, religious, material, racial, environmental, educational, and a host of other areas of human endeavor. Approaching poverty with this understanding makes material poverty a subset of a broader problem.

A major issue in understanding poverty is the gradual disappearance of humanity as a construct, and the emergence of "economic individuals" - whose worth is measured by their ability to pay bills and to amass wealth. A homeless individual in Washington, D.C. indicated to the author and a group of students participating in a service-learning program that "when you are homeless, you become invisible". The economically weak and vulnerable of contemporary society are inconsequential. They may, to some people, represent 'the unhealthy' aspect of a given community; they do not have economic power and, therefore, have no social value. Personal relations and the need to be considerate of others are sacrificed for economic and material survival.

The reverse was the case in traditional Africa where an individual's wealth was considered useful and meaningful only within the context of "other" - kin, extended family, and the community. The extended family and the community were the antidotes to human poverty in traditional Africa. Busia tells of the importance of the family as armor against poverty. According to him:

There is, everywhere, the heavy accent on family - the blood relatives, the group of kinsfolk held together by a common origin and a common obligation to its members, to those who are living and those who are dead...The individual is brought up to think of himself (herself) always in relation to this group and to behave always in such a way as to bring honor and not disgrace to its members. The ideal set before him (her) is that of mutual helpfulness and cooperation within the group of kinsfolk. Each member should help the other, in health or sickness, in success or failure, in poverty or plenty [Busia, 1962].

The traditional African view presented by Busia puts the 'blame' for poverty primarily on the community before it is defined as an individual predicament. If it pertains to the community then its

causes, its victims and all community resources become imperative in attacking poverty. Human poverty revolves around issues in the community such as inequity; forms of injustice; gender, racial, religious forms of discrimination; environmental and educational factors; and rural/urban migration. In writing the "Forward" for a UNDP 2000 *Poverty* Report, the administrator of the world agency identified some of the lessons UNDP has learned fighting poverty. One lesson is that understanding and fighting poverty cannot be effective if limited to the myopic and economic sphere. According to him "One lesson is clear: such programmes (of poverty alleviation) need to be multisectoral and comprehensive. Human poverty is, after all, a multidimensional problem, cutting across the sectoral responsibilities of government departments" [Brown, 2000]. Fighting poverty as a human phenomenon requires formal, informal, private, public, cultural, religious, and political group efforts. In spite of its universal nature, proffering solutions to human poverty requires a context-dependent approach to help avoiding the fallacy of 'one size fits all'.

## POVERTY ALLEVIATION

A humanistic definition of poverty opens up the fight against poverty to different strategies and efforts because of the complex nature of the problem. Although the economic dimension is important, it should not be pursued in a way that is limited by the usual 'trickle down' syndrome, or what Freire calls 'false generosity' [Freire 2004]. The comprehensive approach to fighting poverty must include government, nongovernmental, corporate, and labor sectors, and different strata of civil society including social movements and individuals. For the efforts to yield the required outcome, appropriate socio-economic, political, cultural, educational and even religious 'tools' must be employed.

One major tool is education. Another tool, which is closely related to the first, is participatory development. These tools have several options and sub-tools that are effective in fighting poverty using the human approach, rather than the abstract tools designed by the World Bank, the IMF, or government experts that are imposed on communities. Following is a comparison of current Western and traditional African efforts to alleviate poverty through education and participatory development.

### Current Efforts

In an analysis of society-imposed 'poverty' on migrant women in Canada, Shahrzad Mojab acknowledges the power of economic globalization as a factor in most contemporary changes in human endeavors. "A major source of change is the globalization and restructuring of the capitalist economy, which make extraordinary demands on education in general and adult education in particular" [Mojab, 2001].

There have been numerous responses to the impact of economic globalization on the economically vulnerable of society. The United Nations (UN) and several of its agencies have been at the forefront of fighting poverty in impoverished and developing countries. The UN's efforts have included assisting world regions and individual governments, developing microeconomic tools for fighting poverty, promoting new technologies for employment and poverty alleviation, and collaborating with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to fight poverty. Some of the UN's agencies involved in fighting poverty at different levels are the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Program (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Other UN agencies associated with fighting poverty include the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) among others.

Most of the efforts of the different agencies of the UN in fighting poverty dovetail in many countries and in several problem areas of the world because of the inter-agency partnerships prevalent in the UN. Following are a few examples. The UNDP Annual Report - *Capacity Development: Empowering People and Institutions*- [UNDP 2008] provides concrete examples and descriptions of successful efforts at reducing poverty. The UNDP's efforts in the areas of capacity building, democratic governance, environmental development and inclusive growth provide concrete examples of combating poverty through all areas of human endeavor. The report cites the agency's efforts at capacity building in many countries using the rubric of UN's *Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)*. Specific examples include the creation in Niger of a crop of grassroots volunteers in a "national volunteerism scheme" which included "elected administrators in rural areas" who acquired and combined expertise in "delivering public

services". The UNDP's capacity building effort in Jordan collaborated with the Government to create more access to land for the poorest communities by helping to clear landmines. The creation of an online "brain-gain" database helped Albania to benefit from the professional and related skills of its citizens in Diaspora. There are also examples of UNDP's partnerships with the private sector to foster capacity building as a way of combating global poverty.

Democratic governance is another important area of poverty alleviation because of the corollary between poor governance and human poverty. Between 2007 and 2008, the UNDP worked to upgrade institutions that facilitate free and fair elections that allow citizen participation in the democratic process in several parts of the world. Specific examples include efforts in Sierra Leone, Bangladesh, Bhutan, "the world's youngest democracy" and Solomon Islands.

Poverty alleviation through environmental development was also a major area of the UNDP's efforts. In Northern Kenya where Lake Baringo is predicted by scientists to dry up in about two decades for example, the UNDP "is helping to restore the soil by supporting villagers to farm and graze animals in new ways". At the Tanzanian end of Lake Victoria, farmers are being assisted to use clean wind and solar energy to pump water into their farms instead of the environmentally hazardous diesel – powered water pumps. The successful effort that restored over "40,000 hectares of wetland ecosystems on 17 degraded peat lands" in Belarus is another example, among several others, of the war on poverty through environmental protection and development.

Creating an inclusive society through strong institutions has also been used to fight poverty across geo-spaces. Examples include the microfinance project in Syria's poor northern region that saw the income of "over 7, 8000 households...rise by 20 percent". The intervention strategy devised by the UN/UNDP in partnership with the Government of Guinea to combat the problems of heavy concentration of refugees from neighboring countries is helping in the areas of "food security, the HIV response, basic social service provision and governance". In Ghana, the UNDP helped to build and sustain *Information Centers* to provide access to computers and related communication tools that give citizens wider access to information. Addressing poverty through health issues has been prominent in the UNDP's efforts. Notable in this area is responding to HIV/AIDS. Examples include partnerships in China with the National Center for AIDS/STD Prevention and Control that helped to strengthen community ownership among the gay community on HIV prevention and awareness activities including access to "voluntary counseling and treatment services". Similar projects are listed in Thailand and Djibouti.

In addition to the efforts of the UN and its organs, individual governments oversee poverty alleviation programs directly or through departments, directorates or commissions. Most of the efforts by states and governments often include job creation, training programs, several forms of welfare programs, and other economic stimuli. The United States government, for example, uses such agencies to combat poverty at both the domestic and international levels. Some of the agencies of the US government include African Development Foundation (ADF), Agriculture Department (USAD) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in addition to other agencies and departments at federal, state and local levels across the United States.

The *Fiscal Year 2008 USAID Annual Performance Report* [USAID 2008] provides a representative summary of the United States government's efforts at fighting global poverty through its agencies and departments. The USAID report highlights improved health outcomes with examples of the "dramatic increase in the number of people receiving HIV/AIDS treatments..." a decrease in malaria parasite prevalence and severe anemia in Zambia. The Columbia success story of forming cooperatives and providing social and economic assistance to individuals is cited as an example of fighting poverty through "improved community stability" in communities of victims of drug violence. Also included in the report are examples of improved governance in Kosovo and Tanzania through assistance with widening access to radio, television and the print media to between 70 and 90 percent. The provision of about \$28 million worth of commodities for victims of the Cyclone Nargis in Burma and the "\$29 million worth of humanitarian assistance for Haiti" were examples of how USAID helped combat poverty through 'Emergency Relief'.

Adult education (with a focus on participatory and human dimensions) is a viable tool in alleviating poverty. The efforts by some colleges and universities to instill a sense of participatory development through service learning programs are useful models. The University of South Dakota (USD), for example, encourages and equips students to fight poverty indirectly and sometimes directly through its Service Learning and Civic Engagement Programs. USD's center for academic engagement through the

*Alternative Week of Off-Campus Learning (AWOL)* during academic breaks affords “USD students and staff to work with a cluster of community agencies on any number of issues, such as hunger, children’s challenges, homelessness, poverty, and the like” [USD 2008]. AWOL student group projects in 2008 included:

- helping rebuild an area of a tornado disaster in Kansas with a special focus on environmental related poverty issues;
- helping rebuild a town devastated by a hurricane in Mississippi – a similar project as above
- participating in educational programs for children who live in shelters with their parents in Washington, D.C.
- volunteering in other projects to address and combat ‘poverty and its effects on education’.

Adult education from its inception has always been an indispensable weapon of social, political, economic, and cultural development. As an avenue to equity and social justice, adult education provides different levels of education especially for those who have been denied or disappointed by the formal educational system. Using programs in continuing education, adult basic education, vocational, technical and professional education, popular education, environmental and health education - adult education provides a lifelong opportunity for individuals to pursue self-empowerment.

Implied in the adult education approach is the involvement of all strata of society. Adult education aimed at fighting human poverty is a participatory and self-propelled effort. It is democratic and addresses the root and branch of the problem. The root and branch of poverty include illiteracy, environmental/ecological problems; acute health challenges especially the HIV/AIDS pandemic, political violence and absence of the democratic process, and all forms of inequity. Heribert Hinzen suggested three principal potential areas where adult education can lead in the fight against poverty. They include:

- Combating poverty by teaching income-generating skills and promoting the informal sector of the economy and self-help groups
- Promoting participatory democratic institutions, human rights and rights of women, and sustainable development
- Strengthening the civil society by working with non-governmental organizations acting as self-help groups or cornered social, economic and ecological issues [Hinzen, 2004].

The adult education focus in fighting human poverty is a blend of the theoretical and the practical. The approach is emancipatory and focuses on individual and social development. This approach integrates all sectors, fights poverty in its holistic perspective, and avoids the sectional approach. The UNDP in its 2000 report identified lack of integration as a general weakness of poverty programs. The report identified three specific weaknesses. One is “the artificial divide between economic and social policies. Another is the habit of thinking sectorally. And a third part is organizational: governments divide departments along sectoral lines” [UNDP, 2000]. As a human problem, poverty is multi-dimensional and multisectoral and cannot be combated effectively through sectoral skirmishes.

Adult education through its many lifelong learning and empowering programs provides the root and branch approach that incorporates all sections in fighting human poverty. The adult education approach includes different forms of need-based, context dependent, individual and community education; community mobilization for active involvement; and self-propelled development. This approach puts people and education at the forefront of the fight against poverty rather than make the dictates of economic globalization the central focus.

Nyerere established a link between education and self-development. According to him, “there is only one way in which you can cause people to undertake their own development. That is by education and leadership” [Nyerere 1974]. UNESCO has been in the forefront of using education, especially adult education to ‘humanize development’. UNESCO’s Fifth International Conference on Adult Education held in Hamburg in 1997 (CONFINTEA V) established adult learning as the key to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Using the concept ‘lifelong education’ Finger & Asún quoted from the Final Declaration that affirms “that only human-centered development and a participatory society based on the full respect of human rights will lead to sustainable and equitable development” [Finger & Asún 2001].

The human-centered development approach is akin to the traditional African sense of community that establishes a constant symmetry between individual and collective interests. The African idea of life in the community supports the argument that poverty is human poverty. It further supports the argument that poverty should be fought through participatory efforts.

### The African *Ujamaa*

The traditional African sense of community and the intricate connection between everything – material and spiritual, the unborn, the living and the departed – all combine to define life in the community. Several writers [Avoseh 2001, Onwubiko 1991, Mbiti 1969] have established the unmistakable emphasis on family and kin and how individual existence is meaningful mostly within the context of relating and relations. Chinua Achebe gives an example in *Things Fall Apart*. At a celebration of a gathering of kin and family, the eldest person, according to tradition, said the blessing, and prayed to the ancestors begging them to give the clan health and more children. He prayed thus: “we do not ask for wealth, because he that has health and children will also have wealth. We do not pray for more money, but to have more kinsmen. We are better than animals because we have kinsmen” [Achebe 1994].

Achebe provides an example of how family and kin serve as ‘insurance’ and help individuals absorb adversities and losses that would have put them in penury. When Okonkwo, the main character in *Things Fall Apart* inadvertently committed manslaughter during a celebration; his punishment was total destruction of all his property and he had to go into exile with his immediate family. He fled to his mother’s kinsmen where he was “well received”. He was given plots of land large enough for him to build his own house and three for his wives. His mother’s kinsmen helped him build. He was also given land to plant crops. He started a new life, which was as successful as the one he had in his father’s land. Okonkwo and his immediate family would have become homeless and poor in today’s world. What would have been an individual loss was absorbed by relationships.

The relationships described above transcend humans because they include the departed and even the unborn. Relationships are defined by corporate existence and values rather than by individual gains and selfishness. Although personal gains emanate from such relationships, as in the example of Okonkwo, they are not the primary motive. The primary motive is ensuring that there is economic, social, religious and cultural space for each member of the community to live in dignity. The motive is to ensure that individuals are supported in times of adversity such that they do not become ‘the unhealthy aspect of society’. Relationships are conceived as “a way of life emphatically centered upon human interests and values; a mode of living evidently characterized by empathy, and by consideration and compassion for human beings” [Onwubiko 1991].

The values of living in a community are intricately linked to the educational system. Traditional African education is synonymous with life and living in a community. The values are oral and are couched in songs, festivals, celebrations, myths, taboos, proverbs, and stories. In addition to the support from family, kin and community, the vocational aspect of African traditional education enjoins every individual to learn a trade and have a profession with which to support self and family. Laziness is a vice and is often indicative of being ‘uneducated’. An ‘uneducated’ person in traditional African society is usually lazy, of easy virtue, and of blemished character. Such individuals, irrespective of age, are regarded as empty and rarely command any respect. Therefore, vocational education is one way of fighting poverty. Furthermore, there are corporative ventures in most communities. Individuals or groups of friends combine and rotate working as a group on each other’s farms or chosen assignments. It is imperative (except in cases of ill health or bereavement) that everyone honor their obligation to work as needed or forfeit their benefits.

A Yoruba saying emphasizes African values: *dá ̀toro dá ̀toro da ̀toro àgbà tí kò dá ̀toro omi ̀obè ni yio jẹ* (literally, everyone contributes something, anyone who fails to contribute, even if such individual is an elder, he/she will have no meat in his/her soup). The message is that in spite of the support from kin and a community, each individual is expected to participate and to be active in the life of the community. Laziness and self-induced poverty have repercussions. Hard work and dignity of labor are antidotes to poverty in traditional African society. Again, the Yoruba put it aptly: *isè ni ̀ogùn isè* (hard work is the remedy for poverty). The traditional African perspective of fighting poverty includes all that matters in the life of the community - and not just the economic aspect.

In contemporary times, Julius ‘Nwalimu’ Nyerere, a great adult educator and former president of Tanzania, incorporated the traditional African perspective into modern development efforts through his *Ujamaa*. *Ujamaa* is referred to as ‘African socialism’ because it takes after the traditional African perspective of putting the survival of the community over and above individual self-interests. *Ujamaa* is the concept of self-reliance that emphasizes the importance of the individual as well as individual communities in their own development. Nyerere uses the *Ujamaa* to practice his brand of adult education as a catalyst for development. Nyerere’s concept of development puts humanity at the center of development. Development for him is self-development, which by implication is participatory. It intones

active citizenship in line with the traditional African perspective. He uses his view on rural development to summarize his *Ujamaa* as follows:

If the people are to develop, they must have power. They must be able to control their own activities within the framework of their village communities...The people must participate not just in the physical labor involved in economic development but also in the planning of it and the political and economic power have to be held by the people...if development is to be in the people's interest [Nyerere, 1980].

For Nyerere, adult education is the key to the *Ujamaa* because adult education addresses the root and branch of development. In fact, he establishes adult education as a synonym for development. In his address to the International Adult Education Conference in 1976 titled *Adult Education and Development*, later code-named *The Declaration of Dar-es-Salaam*, he underlined the link between development and education: Humans are at the center of development just as they are at the center of education [Nyerere, 1978]. He elaborated his adult education method in several writings and programs, including agricultural extension and the *Ujamaa* villages. By putting humans at the center of the educational and the development process, Nyerere's *Ujamaa* invokes the traditional African approach of adopting a holistic approach to issues and problems in the community. Whereas an individual may experience adversity in such a setting, the response to such adversities was mostly communal beginning with kin and family. The holistic and human approach to fighting poverty goes beyond the economic and includes the value of human dignity.

The African traditional way is often criticized as belonging to the past and having no relevance in today's world. Nyerere's *Ujamaa* has been criticized on the ground that it has too much of the traditional African socialism in it. Furthermore, it has been criticized as being located in a 'dualistic view of the world' that portrays colonialism as the evil that destroyed all the good that the traditional African system represented [Mulenga, 2001]. The criticisms of the traditional African system are valid to some extent but they do not invalidate the fact that the traditional African society offered more to the African in terms of dignity, high self-concept and a more abundant life. Nyerere's holistic and people-centered approach to development, in spite of the limited resources, achieved more for Tanzanians than most Structural Adjustment Programs would.

The import of the traditional African values in fighting poverty in contemporary times is in the propriety of the holistic approach. The holistic approach takes poverty beyond the lack of material well-being and makes it life defining. In the traditional African family values system, adversity and fortunes are shared at the group level while acknowledging the individuals at the center of such adversities or fortunes. The traditional African values emphasize the common effort and grassroots approach to tackling problems. This approach insulates individuals from drastic aftermaths of misfortunes. That is why, for instance, the idea of homelessness and nursing homes do not make sense in such communities.

The cross-cultural comparison of fighting poverty in this paper points to poverty as a human phenomenon and poverty as defined by lack of wealth. Most of contemporary efforts tend to emphasize poverty along the confines of wealth and thus fights it through palliatives. The traditional way fights poverty from all angles because of its holistic ways, and from the author's perspective, is much more supportive of the individual who is poor than in contemporary efforts.

The UN/UNDP's understanding and fighting of poverty from a broader human perspective is akin to the traditional African family way. The example cited above of UNDP's efforts and successes at fighting poverty covers all areas of human activity and emphasizes the local community as an indispensable partner. The use of grassroots connections to make people trust and buy into programs designed to alleviate poverty is imperative. United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) cites the success story of polio vaccination in Bauchi State in northern Nigeria. The report mentions how the approach of using a village campaign coordinated by a local woman helped UNICEF to overcome the people's mistrust of polio immunization. UNICEF used social mobilization akin to the traditional African community-based interventions which makes the immunization project something that is "today accepted graciously" [UNICEF 2007]. The traditional African values way presents the lesson of fighting poverty through the people and their values instead of imposing programs designed and donated by 'outsiders'.

## CONCLUSION

The cross-cultural comparison in this paper was drawn from traditional African and 21<sup>st</sup> century efforts at fighting poverty. Poverty alleviation cannot be effective unless there is a clear understanding of poverty and the context in which it exists. A definition of poverty that goes beyond economic parameters to include larger human values has been presented. Placing human dignity at the center of poverty alleviation downplays the notion of the poor as a 'burden' to the community, and relates poverty to social justice in a world where some have much more than they will ever need, while others wallow in abject poverty.

Defining and understanding poverty from the human perspective draws attention to certain fundamentals of poverty and development that are obscure when poverty is couched solely in economic frames. Fighting poverty as a human phenomenon lends itself to

"genuine development (which) must be based on the concept of man (woman) in his/her full dimension, and not on some aspects...of being. A developed society...is one in which both parts of humans, the spiritual and the material, are made the basis of societal aspiration and development and are held in balance' [Opoku, 1985].

The most effective way of fighting poverty is through the root and branch approach of education and participatory development. Education empowers individuals to fight the battle and be actively involved. This holistic approach does not ignore the need for context-dependent solutions; rather it recognizes poverty as a human problem that has ramifications beyond the poor. Although many commendable efforts are put in place to fight poverty by world and regional bodies, by governments, by NGOs and by individuals, more efforts need to be geared towards the non-economic and human aspects. The traditional African perspective, in spite of its being distant in history, offers a humanistic perspective that is compatible with adult education for social justice and development. Poverty alleviation as a global problem requires concerted efforts and inclusive strategies, including methods that worked in traditional societies.

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