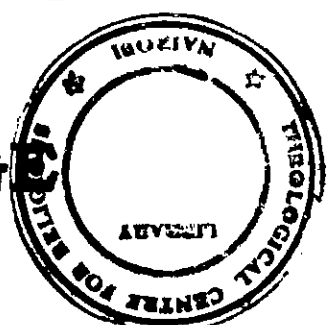


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# **CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA**

## **TANGAZA COLLEGE**



### **INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL MINISTRY**

#### **UNEMPLOYMENT IN MALAWI CASE OF MIRACLE PROJECT**

#### **LONG ESSAY**

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(SOCIETY OF MARY)**

**DATE: MARCH 2001**

**NAIROBI - KENYA.**

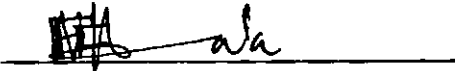
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## STUDENT' S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my own original work realized through scientific research, personal observations, reflections and experience. I hereby declare that the material used herein has not been submitted for academic credit to any other institute. All sources have been cited in full.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Bro. NTHALA KAMTEMBO FELIX, SM.**

## **ABSTRACTION**

The problem that has been discussed in the essay is unemployment in Malawi, case M.I.R.A.C.L.E project. The research took place in Malawi and in the northern region of the country in a district called Karonga. This was done between the months of June and August 2000.

Data collection was done through personal observation, this was carried out through visiting the most affected areas within the district. Another method was through interviews. The researcher interviewed the victims of the situation and drew from the interviews a clear judgement on the impact of the problem on the local people.

The findings of the research are that; Malawi is facing a challenging problem of unemployment among her citizens. It is quite a serious problem that it might take some good number of years to curb it. Unemployment in Malawi a third world country, might be a reflection of the same situation in other third world countries in Africa.

However, in Malawi there are Church and non governmental organisations that are trying to help out on the problem. One of such organisation is the M.I.R.A.C.L.E project

## **ABBREVIATION**

<b>AIDS</b>	<b>Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</b>
<b>GOM</b>	<b>Government of Malawi</b>
<b>HIV</b>	<b>Human Immune-deficiency Virus</b>
<b>T A</b>	<b>Traditional Authority</b>
<b>ILO</b>	<b>International Labour Organisation</b>
<b>M.I.R.A.C.L.E</b>	<b>Marianist Institute of Rural Artisans and Cultivators for Lifeskills Education.</b>
<b>UNESCO</b>	<b>United Nation Education, Science and Cultural Organisation</b>
<b>Bro.</b>	<b>Brother</b>
<b>I.M.A.N.I</b>	<b>Incentive for the Marianist to Assist the Needy be Independent.</b>
<b>CORAT</b>	<b>Christian Organisation Research Advisory Trust</b>
<b>J.C. P</b>	<b>Job Creation Programme</b>
<b>GDP</b>	<b>Gross Domestic Products</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non Governmental Organisation</b>

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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I am also thankful to the Social Ministry Department in Tangaza College, mainly my lecturers who have equipped me well during my studies.

Lastly, I express my gratitude to all my classmates and all friends are deep in my heart. Thanks once again all of you for your contributions to this work to this work directly or indirectly. May God bless you all.

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## **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

Malawi, formerly Nyasaland, is a landlocked country in Southeast Africa. Long and narrow in shape, Malawi stretches about 837 km from north to south and varies in width from 8 to 160 km from east to west. Tanzania borders it to the north, Mozambique to the east and south, and Zambia to the west. (See appendix 1)

Malawi is primarily an agricultural country, with 87 percent of its work force engaged in farming, and forestry. The nation has traditionally been self-sufficient in food, but malnutrition among children has been a serious problem since the beginning of the 1990s. The principle crops are maize, sugarcane, fruits, vegetables, and groundnuts. Major exports include tobacco, tea, sugar, and groundnuts. A growing fishing industry, producing for domestic needs is centred at Nkhota-kota on the western shore of Lake Malawi. In 1995 the catch was 65,000 metric tons. Major manufacture are goods, principally for domestic consumption, include processed food, chemical products, textiles, and beverages. Many Malawians work as migratory labourers in South Africa and other countries.

Karonga district in Malawi has "opened my eyes" to the problem of unemployment. Having been in Karonga for two month, we came to realise that the cause of unemployment lies primarily on great forms of injustice, and poor governance leading to a huge gap between the rich and the poor, and the lack of motive at local and national levels. In addition, morale among the societal members in likewise very low.

One of the most dramatic results out of such a situation is unemployment. While I was there, many young people were coming to me trying to find out whether Kenya was better in terms of employment so that they could come to Kenya for employment. Unemployment is not only a problem for Karonga or Malawi as a

nation, but it is rather a situation, which the horn of Africa is experiencing. From the statistics given, we see that the unemployment rate has escalated from 15% to 25% (World Bank, 1996) for the past decade.

This paper, aims at taking a critical assessment of the reality of unemployment, and show how this is one of the most degrading problems for Karonga and our entire country. Everyone seems to be aware of the problem, but in the end few people speak and are willing to do something. The problem is real and demands special and urgent attention.

Another reason of choosing to discuss this topic is to try to give some simple, but concrete suggestions on how to tackle the problem of unemployment. The suggestion however, are meant to help and at the same time provoke some thought in anyone at any level to look into the matter more concretely and objectively.

Lastly, the whole of this work will be done taking into account the gospel message. As social ministers and above all, Christians, we strongly believe that Jesus Christ's teaching is still a living word for us today. This shows God's great concern for his people especially the poorest and the needy. This should therefore help us have right motivation in order to meet the needs of the people of God. In the same context, then, the parable of the "Workers in the Vineyard" becomes a clear and good example of God's concern for the unemployed persons.

### **Methodology**

We base our methodology on the well-known method of ~~see~~ that is studying the reality at hand. In so doing, one perceives the situation of the things in the area of concern. The researcher is therefore able to come up with some good judgement over the problem. Another method is judge. In this method, the researcher looks at the problem with a critical mind and tries to relate the situation with others that he or

she comes across. This method helps in judging what steps to take. For this paper the judge part will be based on the word of God and the social teaching of the Church. Finally, we have the action method. This method calls for a particular action towards the problem at hand. In this paper, the action will be based on personal observations of the situation, suggestions and recommendation. This kind of research focuses on social cultural analysis, theological reflection, exposure, planning, action and evaluation. The techniques involved were content analysis of the situation, literature review and interview.

### **Summary**

The first chapter is the see part. Here, we will provide a brief history, geographical, social, economical, political and cultural analysis of the fact-finding report in all its aspects. We will look at the work done by MIRACLE project in Karonga, the background of the project, management, its activities, achievements, challenges, weaknesses, and targeted group.

In the first chapter is the judge part. Here, we address the overview of unemployment in Malawi, and what unemployment means. We discuss factors leading to unemployment, giving special attention to the problem of unemployment among youths, who are vulnerable and most affected persons.

The third chapter will be the continuation of judge part, which will be connected to the action dimension of the essay towards the end. Here, we will be giving special reference to the word of God; this will be a theological reflection of unemployment. This will be done by doing the exegesis of the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard in (Matthew 20:1-16). The commentary and the reflection at the end of the chapter will try to actualise the parable and taking into accounts the Karonga situation.

We will also give some possible solutions on how to combat the unemployment problem from the side of the government and the Church. From ecclesiastical perspective of the church, we will give a brief summary of her social teachings regarding unemployment.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **SITUATING THE PROBLEM**

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will discuss the steps that MIRACLE project in Karonga has taken to address the problem of unemployment in the area. The researcher will also look into the geographical makeup of the district, the causes of the problem, and the socio-cultural activities of the area. It will also look into the organisation, its strengths, weakness and achievements of MIRACLE project.

#### **1.1 GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIOIN OF KARONGA**

Karonga is a town in the northern part of Malawi. It is situated on the western shore of Lake Malawi. (See appendix 2). However, the population density of Karonga is higher than the average for the Northern Region as a whole. The district is divided into three T.A's administrative areas i.e. Kilupula in the North, Kyungu in the Centre, and Wasambo in the South. The district is boarded by Tanzania to the far North, Lake Malawi to the East, Chitipa district, the Nyika National Park and Rumphi district to the West, and Rumphi district again to the South. The Southern part of the district is mountainous, but the whole district is situated on the plane grounds. The big part of the land is covered with rich, darkish, loam-clay soils, good for agriculture.

#### **1.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES OF THE AREA**

A long time ago, in 1877, Karonga had become the stronghold of the notorious Arab slaver Mlozi. The modern town was founded, however with the opening of a British trading post in 1883. The slave trade in the area ended in 1895. Afterwards, Karonga grew as a commercial centre and entrepôt for local agricultural produce. The economy of the hinterland is based on cotton and rice production along

the lake and on coffee and livestock in the west. It is augmented by subsistence fishing from Lake Malawi.

Due to the escalating problem of unemployment, the culture of the people in Malawi has changed drastically. The motivation and attitude to some other type of work has changed and has taken a different form. People are more interested in working in big cities leaving some vital resources in their rural areas i.e. land.

Poverty has become like an acceptable norm in the society. Because nobody seems to be heading anywhere, poverty has become part of life of the ordinary people. Farming is no longer a value to most people. **See table below**

#### **LAND USE IN KARONGA**

<b>LAND USE</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
<b>FOREST</b>	<b>39.3%</b>
<b>MEADOWS /PASTURES</b>	<b>19.6%</b>
<b>AGRICULTURE</b>	<b>18.1%</b>
<b>OTHER</b>	<b>23.0%</b>

**SOURCE: Microsoft Encarta Encyclopaedia 1999**

Because of these deplorable conditions, people are dying. They are dying because of poor living conditions, poor health, and the lack of nutritious foods. Most people do not have money, therefore they are unable to support their livelihood.

Most of the victims are the youths that have just finished either their primary or secondary schooling and are on the outlook for jobs. In Malawi, there seem to be three distinct types of problems that fall under the umbrella of unemployment as

analysed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The first type of the problem is "the frustration of job seekers unable to obtain the type of work or remuneration which they think is reasonable or which their education has led them to expect."<sup>1</sup>

Such a frustration has rendered a majority of Malawians in the rural and urban area jobless. This is the situation that can be referred to as open unemployment. The situation is a complex one because it constitutes both those who willingly reject job due to their high educational credentials and those who are willing to work but they cannot find any jobs. Todaro calls this kind of unemployment "voluntary and involuntary unemployment."<sup>2</sup>

The situation of voluntary and involuntary unemployment exists largely among the Malawians due to differences in educational qualifications. Since there is no compulsory level of education imposed by the Malawian government, the population for adults and youth in search of employment varies in skills and qualifications. As Todaro says:

Voluntarily unemployed persons are those unwilling to accept jobs for which they could qualify, probably because they have means of support other than employment. Involuntary unemployment is a situation in which job seekers are willing to work but there are no jobs available for them.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore we should not be talking of unemployment in most African countries. We should rather be talking of underemployment as it has already been mentioned. Having this in mind, the other notable problem in Malawi is underemployment. This is experienced by many working sectors of the economy. In Malawi, this is visible in the people employed in the industries and other private sectors i.e. farm estates. The salary scales in these sectors are very low. Some are

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<sup>1</sup> International Labour Office, Employment, Incomes and Equality: Strategy for Increasing Productive Employment in Malawi (Geneva: Imprimeries Populaires, 1972), p.

<sup>2</sup> Todaro, p 269.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

paid after harvest times--especially those working in tobacco farm estates. Others by the end of the year are paid almost nothing because a lot is deducted from their wages by the owner out of what the employee used while on the farm.<sup>4</sup> This is an abuse of the available human resources. The problem, however, has been attributed to high supply of labour in the country against the demand of it--thus, forcing the price of labour to be very low. It is a situation of surplus labour, which Todaro defines as, "The excess supply of labour over and above the quantity demanded at the going free-market wage rate."<sup>5</sup>

The third visible problem especially in the rural areas is that of disguised underemployment. Underemployment is rampant as illustrated by the low productivity of small-scale agriculture and the urban informal sector, and the high incidence of absolute poverty experienced in the country. Pointing to the same problem the ILO report noted that this problem is characterised by low productivity of the labour force due to inefficiency in labour development. The ILO report calls this problem, "The under-utilisation and low productivity of the labour force, both male and female, which reflect inefficiency in the way labour is trained, deployed or even supported."<sup>6</sup>

### **1.3 A BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT: M.I.R.A.C.L.E.**

The Society of Mary has been involved in vocational training programmes throughout its 200 year history. Most recently in Kenya, the Marianists have set up Incentive from the Marianist to Assist the Needy be Independent, I.M.A.N.I, which is a vocational training programme, evaluated by CORAT (a well known project

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<sup>4</sup> Mr. Chipimpha Mzumala, A farm employee, interviewed by Felix, 13 July 2000, Karonga.

<sup>5</sup> Todaro, p 274.

<sup>6</sup> International Labour Organisation, Report on the condition of labour in Malawi, 1995, p 136.

evaluator in East Africa) to be one of the best in Kenya. The Marianists started the Nairobi IMANI in 1987 and the Mombasa IMANI in 1998.

The Society of Mary has been in Malawi since 1960. They started Nkhata Bay and Chaminade Secondary schools in 1962. The Marianists also started Mzuzu Technical School. Because of shortage of personnel, Marianists have only managed to maintain a community presence at Karonga.

In 1994 the Marianist Region of East Africa undertook a 2 year long reflection period called "The Cana Process." the purpose of this process was to discern in a communal way the future ministries of the Region. The two priorities decided upon were primary schools for poor children and vocational training centres for poor youths. Since that historical decision the Marianists have started Our Lady of Nazareth Primary School in the Mukuru shantytown of Nairobi and Marianist Trade Centre (Mombasa IMANI) in the Bombolulu shantytown of Mombasa.

During the Cana process it was proposed that a new ministry be opened in Malawi. A team was sent to Malawi in March 1996 to do a feasibility study. The team was composed of four Marianists. Among the Marianists was Bro. Peter Daino (an American, who helped found the IMANI programmes in Nairobi and Mombasa). In April 1999, Brother Peter was sent to Karonga to begin the process of establishing a vocational training centre there. The school began its operations in January 2000.

#### **1.4 LOCALITY OF THE PROJECT**

The project is located in the northern Malawi district called Karonga. This area is at times referred to as "the dead north." because it is one of the least developed region in the whole country. The project is located 7 kilometres west of Karonga town. It is in Bwiba area of traditional authority Kyungu, under the village headman Mwanganda. Built on the same compound with Chaminade Secondary School, it

falls under the jurisdiction of the Catholic parish of St. Marys. Several villages of Mbwill, Mwenelwanda, Bwiba and the Airport surround the project.

### **1.5 MISSION STATEMENT OF THE PROJECT**

The M.I.R.A.C.L.E project is owned and operated by the Society of Mary, Region of Eastern Africa. This project, "exists as an expression of the Marianist concern for the needs and rights of the poor and powerless in the society."<sup>7</sup> This concern is rooted in the Marianist consecration to Mary, mother of the Lord, and in its Marian mission M.I.R.A.C.L.E is committed to respecting and enhancing the God-given life and dignity of every person.

Following the teaching of the Church, the Marianist Brothers and Fathers are responsive to human needs as they arise, both in their immediate environment and in other suffering areas of the world. This inspiration finds its roots in the Marianist spirituality, "Do whatever He tells you"<sup>8</sup> (John 2:5), and "I am the servant of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38) which are Mary's words to the servants at Cana and to the Angel Gabriel at the annunciation. Thus, as Marianist Brothers, we dedicate ourselves to apostolic activities to which providence calls us, according to the needs of time and place. That is one main reason why M.I.R.A.C.L.E is now in Karonga.

M.I.R.A.C.L.E maintains the Catholic position regarding the sanctity of human life; and because they are often the least advantaged the project directs its attention primarily towards the poor youths. Its mission is to move people from situations of dependence and destitution to a situation of increased economic value. Trade

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<sup>7</sup> Office of Religious life, Rule of Life of the Society of Mary (Rome: 1981), 88.

<sup>8</sup> The New American Bible.

education is a major means of achieving M.I.R.A.C.L.E's mission. The centre has been established for both young men and young women and provides trade skill training especially to the youth within two hours walking radius.

### **1.6 SITUATION OF THE YOUTH IN KARONGA**

Due to lack of money and unemployment, the youth have opted for prostitution and idleness. Prostitution in the area is alarming. Being a bordering district with Tanzania, there are so many people coming in and going outside Malawi. The majority of youth in the locality have not been able to go beyond primary school level of education due to financial handicaps in their families. The inability of the parents and guardians to support their children through education has alienated the children from pursuing technical or professional training and thus there are very few youths who have been trained in a skill.

Most of the youths in the areas earn their living through casual jobs, which include farming, and construction jobs, and some of them are idle. They have resorted to criminal behaviour as a means to the end. Quite a good number of them are actually well known thieves, alcoholics, and prostitutes. In trying to find out why they behave the way they do, most of them highlighted problems such as acute poverty, low literacy level and lack of parental guidance because most of them have lost their parents due to AIDS related diseases.

#### **1.6.0 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF M.I.R.A.C.L.E**

The goal of M.I.R.A.C.L.E is to give poor youth in Karonga trade skills appropriate for the rural market as well as life skills appropriate for a virtuous life. Both, trade skills and life skills, will enable young people to earn an income and raise Christ-centred families.

What the project hopes to see in young persons by the end of their time with M.I.R.A.C.L.E. ARE:

- (a) An artisan of Grade Three level (who has passed the government grade test).
- (b) A person who can make moral decisions and who is responsible.
- (c) Someone who knows in a personal way the love of our tender God.
- (d) An employed person who is placed in a job and who stays at the job.
- (e) An artisan who also practices some farming skills.
- (f) A literate person who reads for information and enjoyment.
- (g) An artisan with some business skills and an entrepreneurial spirit.
- (h) An artisan willing to teach his or her trade skill to others.
- (i) An artisan who will promote the sanctity of human life as understood by the Catholic tradition.

#### **1.6.1 REASONS BEHIND PROJECT PROPOSAL**

- (a) To address the challenge of job skill training among the illiterate and the literate who had no means to train in commercial colleges.
- (b) To help the trainees who go through this centre to gain confidence and see themselves as dignified persons.
- (c) To place graduates from M.I.R.A.C.L.E. in durable jobs with a reasonable salary.

#### **1.7 ACTIVITIES OF THE PROJECT**

All the courses that M.I.R.A.C.L.E is offering have duration of one year. This is when we put aside the first year of academics and the third year of attachment. The

trade skills taught are building and carpentry for both male and female trainees, dressmaking and food processing for both boys and girls. In general, when it comes to choosing a course, it is optional. Every student is free to do any course of his or her choice. The training is done in Chitumbuka, which is widely spoken by the people of the north, and in English, the official language.

### **(A) BUILDING**

This is mostly a training skill in brick-making and bricklaying and house building. There is a lot of construction going on in Karonga. The availability of affordable land in Karonga District attracts many people from other districts to come and buy and put up houses. According to the market research we have done there would be jobs in the building trade.

### **(B) CARPENTRY**

This empowers the youth with skills of joinery, which eventually will help them be self-employed. Another thing is that, there is need to produce implements for the agricultural market, items such as: yokes, carts, hoes, beehives, etc. also the need for tables, stools, chairs, and cabinets. Unfortunately there is a great demand for coffins. According to market research, there would be jobs in the Joinery Trade.

### **(C) DRESSMAKING**

This is also a skill-training course. However, this will need specialisation skills to compete with second hand clothes that are easily attainable from nearby Tanzania. For example, a dressmaker who knows embroidery could take a piece of second hand clothing and decorate it to satisfy local taste and fashion.

#### **(D) FOOD-PROCESSING**

This is a great potential. At present agricultural produce is trucked up to Tanzania (only 25 km away) where it is processed and returned to Karonga in a canned or bottled form and purchased as an import. It's now going to be processed here in Karonga, and this is going to yield higher profits for Malawians at large.

#### **(E) JOB CREATION PROGRAMME.**

Just like the project we run in Nairobi, M.I.R.A.C.L.E has more or less the same set up. This programme runs concurrently with the skills training at the centre.

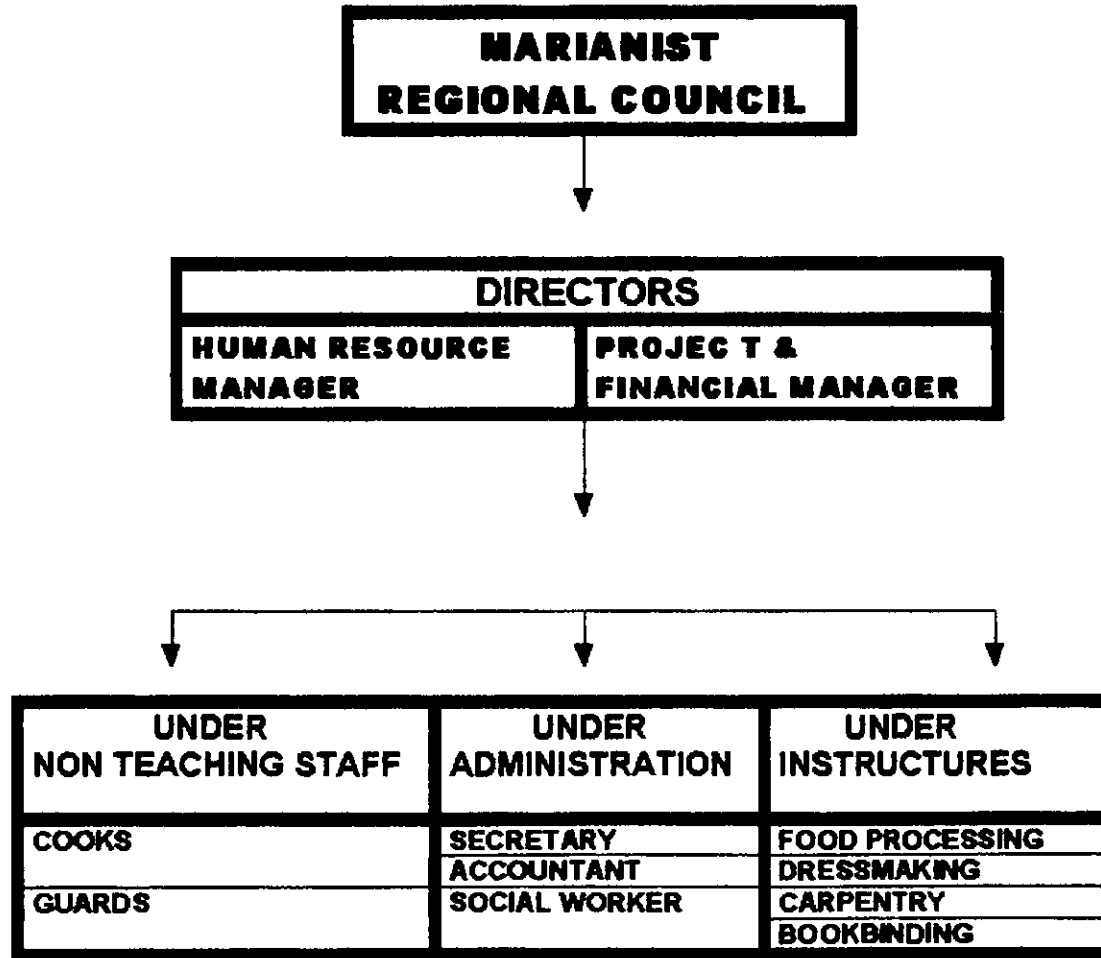
The programme has the following objectives: -

- a) to create durable jobs with a reasonable salary for individuals from low income sectors of the community in Karonga. This is done through loans to already existing small businesses that have proven their ability to absorb the loan and create a job.
- b) to undertake surveys of the demands in the job market. The information gathered is provided to M.I.R.A.C.L.E skills training units, in order to adjust the training to meet the market demands.
- c) to find durable jobs with a reasonable salary for graduates from the centre.

#### **(F) ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROJECT**

The project as mentioned before is under the leadership of the Marianist brothers of the Region of Eastern Africa. On the next page is their Administration structure.

**ADMINISTRATION STRUCTURE**



### **1.7.1 COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE PROJECT**

The number of orphans in Karonga is growing at an alarming rate. Because of this increase, the centre should think of how it will help those who are not admitted at the centre. It is true that the capacity of the centre is fixed and that it can not hold more than what is its current capacity. But one thing is certain that the number of orphans is more than the centre's enrolment.

The effort of job creation programme will be productive. However, I realised that it will be able to place an average of 70-75% of the graduates in stable jobs for the coming five to seven years. This figure on the other hand, will leave between 25-30% graduates either jobless or in very unstable jobs. Therefore, I recommend to the centre to look for ways to establish the following: -

- (a) Adopt some income generating activities within the centre. This will not be possible for the coming ten years but on a small scale it might work. Of course, for people to say the local people will eventually be able to donate - is a false promise. People in the area of Karonga are very poor. They can not donate and as a matter of fact, they themselves need donations.
- (b) A way of increasing the number of friends, affiliates and benefactors of M.I.R.A.C.L.E.
- (c) A more involved programme that will allow the parents and the local community to suggest other viable ways of job creation in addition to what is already existing at the centre.
- (d) A production unit that would be in a position to absorb the 25-30% graduates who will not be lucky enough to secure stable jobs.
- (e) If possible, to start a Micro-enterprise development with an objective of employment creation. This will have to target the M.I.R.A.C.L.E graduates

and help them identify businesses with growth potential and at the same time assist them with loans. Nevertheless, such a programme will need a close follow-up.

## **1.8 CAUSE OF UNEMPLOYMENT**

Going around the cities of Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzuzu, and in some other major towns, it is easy to find people who are trying their best to get jobs or are busy creating new jobs, such as selling newspapers on the streets, or selling empty and used tins, sell blooms and papers.<sup>9</sup> These are just examples of the so called Informal jobs.

In Malawi, most people, especially the youths rely on informal jobs in order to make ends meet. Others never manage to get a job, not even a part time one, and spend time hanging around all the day long looking for "ganyu" (piece works)--this is exactly what happened in the parable of Matthew that we will address in Chapter Three-- or what they call daily employment. It may seem strange, but rising unemployment is a major problem in Malawi and in all other developing countries in Africa. However, for Malawi, more surprising is the emergence of unemployment in some other districts, which are not yet overpopulated like Karonga. This then can be summarised that unemployment is more associated with unbalanced economic progress. It then appears to be a by-product of a "crippled economy" and a disease due to the deficiency of the formal and informal development sector i.e. the industrial and agricultural sector as we shall see in Chapter Three.

Modernisation as is pursued in Malawi, is generating unemployment. The solution to this problem is on choosing a strategy of modernisation, which will curb

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<sup>9</sup> Arvi Hurakainen, Editor. Nordic Journal of African Studies. Volume 9, Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2000, p4.

the spread of unemployment and minimise its demoralising impact on the economic, social and political life of Malawians.

As some scholars have pointed out that a typical developing country like Malawi should have a dual economy with a modern or traditional sector. The modern sector consists of Government activities, education, manufacturing, construction, cash crop agriculture, etc, and its growth can be measured easily in terms of money. The traditional sector is, for the most part, outside of the economic market and it included subsistence agriculture, small-scale traditional construction.<sup>10</sup>

Unemployment in the modern sector is open and visible. People are seeking work for wages and are unable to get jobs. Instead, in the traditional sector things are not so clear and labour surplus takes the form of disguised unemployment or underemployment.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, as long as surplus labour is concerned with the traditional sector, it tends to be overlooked by economists, planners and politicians, but when it becomes visible in the modern sector, it turns into an explosive economic and political problem. This is such that people in urban areas are able to detect easily the oppressive structures, hence, they can easily strike, demonstrate, and in some parts of the world, the dissatisfaction the people has caused economic decay and turned into civil wars.

### **1.8.1. Economic Stagnation**

Among the causes of unemployment, we have decomposition of the economic structures. In Malawi and the entire Sub-Sahara Africa region, the economic expansion has declined over the period 1980-90. As Giovanni and Cornia state;

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> A and D. Young and Dent. Geography of Malawi. Great Britain: Aldine Press, 1964, p30.

*\*Annual gap growth averaged 2.1% for Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole during the 1980's. Given an average population growth of 3.2% average per capita GDP dropped 1.1% during the decade (World Bank 1991).<sup>12</sup>*

Some economic recovery took place in the mid 1980's perhaps because of better financial conditions and the impact of the Structural Adjustment Programmes. But at the end of the same decade, the GDP growth rate dropped once again, and Malawi experienced the worst GDP at the end of the decade than the beginning. This has been due to weakness in primary products and markets, increasing the debt burden, reduction of net public resources inflows and stagnation or decline in private foreign investments.<sup>13</sup> All these factors have created an increase in the foreign exchange, especially of virtually needed imports, with the consequences of a tremendous reduction of public investments.

### **1.8.2 Depression on Industrial Sector**

The other major factor that has contributed a great deal to unemployment is the industrial sector, where the sharpest output decline has occurred in the GDP. Very weak domestic demand, growing competition from foreign goods, the increasing import of raw materials and technology and the decreasing of exported goods has caused a huge depression in capital. Most of the existing companies in Malawi have stopped producing their products because of "kaunjika" (these are the second hand clothes). Most of the people are after such products because they are affordable and available.

The impact on Malawi textile industry is very significant. The well-known Textile Company 'David Whitehead' has retired quite a sizeable work force. All this is an effort to meet the demands of the company's running costs. Another thing is that

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<sup>12</sup> Giovanni, A. Cornia, and et al., Africa's Recovery in the 1990's from stagnation and adjustment to human development. Great Britain: UNICEF, 1992, p19-20.

<sup>13</sup> Ghay, Dharam, Promoting Youth Employment. Policies and Programmes, Geneva: UNRISD, 1988, p3.

the products produced in this company have no market on the international level. The clothes and other variable goods from Tanzania have proved cheap and available. This market has attracted many people. To some extent, it has created employment for a sizeable number of people especially in Karonga. There is a booming illegal business of smuggling of second hand clothes and other products in Karonga district. Some have ended up bringing in and dying of unknown diseases due to this kind of business.

*"Growth in industry slowed to an annual average of less than 1% and the contribution of industry to GDP declined from 32% in 1980 to 27% in 1989(UNDP and World Bank 1989)."*<sup>14</sup>

### **1.8.3 Misconception of the Industrial Development at the expense of Agriculture.**

A third factor, which has contributed to rising rates of unemployment, is to the lack of interest that many Malawians have towards in rural and agricultural sector even though 78% of the labour force in the country is working in this sector.

On one hand, rural incomes usually declined less than the urban sector did. Because of the improvement in the terms of trade agriculture, particularly for export crops, there has been an increase in real household incomes in a number of cases.

*"For instance, the average rural-urban income gap declined from 5.7% to 3.4% between 1990."*<sup>15</sup>

However, other components of adjustment, such as tight and more expensive credits and the withdrawal of subsidies on agricultural inputs, have worked to the disadvantage of small-scale producers. Moreover, the deterioration of the road between Karonga town and Chiweta reduced profit margins and trade opportunities between Karonga and other districts. Because of this poor condition of the road,

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<sup>14</sup> Giovanni, A. Cornia, 1992, p20

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p26.

not many people were interested in opening up any local industries in the area. The result of this is that many people from this district are moving to towns and cities of Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzuzu. Most people coming to these cities end up living in slums, where poverty, violence, prostitution, alcoholism and unemployment are on the increase, especially in the last ten years.

#### **1.8.4 The Education System of Malawi**

Many people have come to an agreement that education is a factor that has a big influence on unemployment. In Malawi, the education system is set up in such a way that it emphasises class theory curriculum. Moreover, this is not only affecting Malawi, but the entire African countries. Out of the entire budget, very little is spent on education. Just to illustrate, in 1994 education budget was only 7.9% of the total budget (World Bank, 1995). It seems as if preparing young people to be competitive at international level is not a priority for Malawi government.

As a matter of fact, for Malawi, levels of future wages and the opportunity of getting a job, especially in the public sector depend mostly on the certificate obtained, regardless of the actual preparation that the candidate has received and the type of work for which he/she has been prepared. Many Colleges and Universities in the country, prepare young people for careers in which it is quite impossible to find a job. Besides, most of these young people consider themselves too qualified for simpler and dirty jobs such as agricultural works--yet the truth is that even their training is irrelevant for work in the modern and private sector which is considerably competitive.

#### **1.8.5 EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME LEVELS.**

Along with the unemployment rate in the formal or informal sector, the growth rate of wage employment slowed down tremendously over the 80's and 90's. In

Malawi, the slow growth rate in wage employment is due to the restriction placed by SAPs in public sector. In particular, the number of secondary school leavers who do not find employment within the Government or do not have possibilities to go for further training is continuously rising.

All this shows that there is a close relationship between high levels of unemployment, underemployment and income distribution. Usually, those with regular pay employment in the public and private sector are among the middle to upper income groups and those without a regular salary are among the most poor. One thing to remember is that not all who have regular salary are all well off and vice versa.

In any case, it still remains that the only mechanisms for reducing poverty and inequality are the provision of a just payment and productive employment opportunities for the poor. As Todaro comments,

*"The provision of more work and wider sharing of the work that is available would certainly go a long way towards solving the problem."*<sup>16</sup>

## **1.9 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**"The current employment situation represents an enormous waste of resources and an unacceptable level of human suffering. It has led to growing social exclusion, rising inequality...and a host of social ills."**

**-International Labour Organisation, World Employment Report, 1995.**

*To define unemployment, almost all the sociologists, economists would agree that "unemployment, as defined and measured in industrialised countries, is not an appropriate variable in the economic calculus of the developing countries."*<sup>17</sup>

The only exception could be the open unemployment in the cities where the number of the people unemployed can be counted. In places like Karonga, where we have many fishermen, who have kept their tradition so strongly despite the

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<sup>16</sup> Michael P. Todaro, Seventh Edition, 2000, p.270.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 2

opportunities for change the definition becomes a little bit complex. As social groups, they are producing less than they might, yet no one can be defined as unemployed. These people are occupied in one way or the other. Quite a good number of these people are involved in rice schemes.

However, Professor Edwards distinguishes five forms of possible definitions of under-utilisation of labour in order to fully comprehend the significance of the unemployment problem.<sup>18</sup>

1. **Open unemployment:** People who do not have any kind of job. In this category are included both voluntary and involuntary. These most often are the school drop outs and the common villagers who spend most their days doing almost nothing.
2. **Underemployment:** Those who work less than they would like to work. More has already been said of the people under this category.
3. **The visible active but under-utilised:** This category includes those who would normally be classified as either unemployed or underemployed, but in fact have found alternative means of "marking time", such as:
  - a) **Disguised underemployment:** People, who seem occupied on a full time basis, even though the services they render may actually require much less than full time.
  - b) **Hidden unemployment:** Those who are engaged in "second choice" non-employment activities.
  - c) **Premature retirement:** This phenomenon is especially evident and apparently growing in the civil service. In many countries, retirement ages are falling at the same time that longevity is increasing.
4. **The impaired:** Those who may work full-time but whose efficiency is seriously impaired through malnutrition or lack of common preventive medicine.
5. **The unproductive:** Those who can provide the human resource necessary for productive work, but who struggle long hours with inadequate complementary resources to make their inputs yield even the essentials of life.

The definitions are many and they can go on and on from one page to the other. But what is important is that all these definitions lead to the fact that unemployed

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Michael P. Todaro. Economic Development, Seventh Edition. London: Longman, 2000, p 269-270.

persons contribute nothing to the welfare of a developing society. As a consequence, these people look at their lives as useless and meaningless.

## **SUMMARY**

M.I.R.A.C.L.E has become a realised dream of the people of Karonga. It has come at the right time when it is needed. On the look of things, the project will benefit a lot of youths in the area. In a place like Karonga where the level of poverty is so acute, such a good will project is a true blessing to the poor as they see their own siblings uplifting their families. The members of staff who participate as partners in the mission of M.I.R.A.C.L.E are on a journey that has just started here in Karonga. Their generosity, commitment, influences and competency counts a lot in inflaming trainees to be the best they can.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **EXTENSIVE VIEW OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN MALAWI**

#### **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, we shall look at the history of unemployment in Malawi and describe the economic situation over the years, which has led to the phenomenon. We will state the present problem of unemployment as it is in Malawi today.

In this chapter, we will also try to define what unemployment is and its impact on the local people in Malawi and Karonga district in particular. We will also look at the response of MIRACLE project to the problem.

#### **2.1 HISTORY OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN MALAWI**

In general, unemployment was rarely a problem in traditional Malawian society everyone had his or her duty to perform within one's tribal culture. Activities such as growing of crops, herding, setting up the council of elders, and many other activities were common jobs in the traditional settings.<sup>19</sup>

In the first decade of independence, development planning in Africa, and Malawi being part of Africa, was strongly influenced by the theory and experience of the industrialised countries. The major focus was on investment and growth output. All the efforts were directed towards production, assuming that employment would take care of itself, as Ndegwa comments:

*Unemployment... began to be felt seriously only after attaining independence in the sixties.*<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Mr S. Kumbwenda, Interviewed , July 2000.

<sup>20</sup> Philip Ndegwa, and John, P. Powelson. 1973, p.1

In the first decade of independence, development planning in Malawi was strongly influenced by the theory and experience of the industrialised countries. The major focus was on investment and growth of output.

First awareness of unemployment problem came from the people seen in the urban areas who had nothing to do. Many of these people come to cities and towns, hoping to find a better life. Unfortunately they ended up living in the most deplorable situations. Slowly, unemployment became a problem in these cities and it spread to some other smaller towns like Karonga.

## **2.2 CONCEPT OF UNEMPLOYMENT**

The Dictionary of Social Sciences defines unemployment as, "The state of a person not being used, which is caused by falling to balance between the supply of labour and the demand for labour."<sup>21</sup> The economists define unemployment as a condition of a person who is capable of working, actively seeking work but unable to find any work. It is important to note that to be considered unemployed a person must be an active member of the labour force and in search of remunerative work. Active member of labour force is a person who is normal and ready to work given a job.

However, for Malawi we should not be talking of unemployment. It will sound better for Malawi to be talking of underemployment. The country has very few industries to accommodate people and this is what is causing the problem. Underemployment is the situation of those who are able to work only for shorter period of time than normal periods--part time workers, seasonal workers, day or casual workers. Underemployed persons are defined by the ILO as those who have

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<sup>21</sup> Julius Gould and William L. Kolb, ed. A Dictionary of Social Sciences (New York: Free Press, 1965), s.v. "Unemployment," by H.S. Booker. pp. 735-736.

worked less than normal duration (visible underemployment), or those whose skills have been under-utilised (disguised underemployment), or whose productivity is inadequate (potential underemployment) ( World Bank, 1980). The term may also describe the condition of workers whose education or training makes them overqualified for their jobs.<sup>22</sup> From the New Catholic Encyclopaedia, unemployment is seen as "idleness of an eligible person who is able and willing to work and be productive in the development of his or her society, but cannot do so either because he or she has not been offered the opportunity to work or because he or she has no resources for self-employment."<sup>23</sup> We have people looking for employment, but we have no places where people can work.

Since in any given country, the nature and characteristics of the problem depend on the structure and stage of development of its economy, unemployment can only be given a working definition. This means that such definitions can never be perfect and exhaustive. It cannot also be a universal definition. For example in the industrialised countries, which provide unemployment relief benefits, the problem is easier to define and quantify.

However, in Malawi, the term unemployment seems to point to that situation where a person has no source of income, is able to work and is actively looking for work, but cannot get it. Given the structure and diversity of Malawi's economy, the problem of unemployment is all the harder to define. At one extreme are those who are openly unemployed and are actively looking for work? This group is mainly composed of the youths that are school-leavers and who moved from their rural area in search for white-collar jobs in the urban and town areas. At the extreme also are

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<sup>22</sup> Merriam Webster College. Knowledge for the Information. Encyclopaedia Britannica CD 99.

<sup>23</sup> The Catholic University of America. The New Catholic Encyclopaedia (New York: McGraw Hill Company, 1996), s.v. "Unemployment," by J.J. Hooker. Pp. 392-394.

those who perform household tasks and family obligations without receiving direct remuneration. And between these extremes are those in the rural and urban area who are fully or partly occupied in some economic activity but whose productivity and income are low.

A definition of unemployment is extremely problematic in developing countries. Some would limit the unemployment to those who are actively seeking employment (World Bank, 1980). The ILO definition embraces those who are without work but available for and actively seeking work (Husmanns and others, 1990; Mayer, 1991). Others would include those who are available for work but have become so discouraged that they have given up looking. The ILO criteria for those seeking work includes those-

Taking steps to indicate availability for work (by registering or any other overt means) [but] may be relaxed in non-industrialised countries where self-employment predominates, in order to include persons discouraged from seeking work, especially women (Mayer, 1991, p. 348)

Unemployment therefore in simple terms can be defined as those reporting that they did not work for any employer or themselves. Unemployment was rarely a problem in traditional African society. Everybody had a duty to perform within his or her tribal culture. Activities such as growing crops, herding, setting up the council of the elders, etc, were the most common jobs in the traditional settings. As it said by one scholar that;

*"Wars, cattle raids, famine disease and poverty were the major problems not lack of occupation. Unemployment began to be felt seriously only in 1965."*<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Philip, Ndegwa, & John, P. Powelson. Employment in Africa some critical issues. Geneva: ILO, 1973, p 1

In the first decade of independence, development planning in Africa was strongly influenced by the theory and experience of the industrialised countries. The major focus was on investment and growth output. All effort was directed to production and our leaders assumed that employment was to take care of itself.

The first awareness of the unemployment problem came from the people seen in the cities who had nothing to do. Many people arrived, ending up living in poor towns, receiving help from relatives who had preceded them. Probably, these people come to towns with the hope that their economic and social welfare would improve. But slowly this turned out to be the beginning of the problem of which in the long run, affects the entire country not just those living below poverty line.

### **2.3 ECONOMIC HISTORY THAT LED TO UNEMPLOYMENT**

By the start of the 1970s significant structural problems surfaced. The strategy based upon agricultural growth, land distribution and shift to high value crops together with import substitution protected industrial growth proved to have shortcomings in a situation of worsening external terms of trade under influence of the oil shocks. Michael Todaro points out that the "seven years (1973-1980), the oil crisis lowered GDP growth to an annual 5% rate."<sup>25</sup> This decline in GDP led to quick government responses to the problem.

The backbone of the Malawi economy is agriculture, which regularly accounts for two-third of the gross domestic product and 90% of export earnings and which employs more than 80% of the working population. However, the sector increasingly concentrated on three cash crops of; tobacco, tea and sugar cane. The small

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<sup>25</sup> Michael P. Todaro. Economic Development (England: Addison Wesley, 2000) pp. 284.

industrial sector was geared upon processing agricultural products, with some limited manufacturing of imported substitutes.

The government had sought to strengthen the agricultural sector by encouraging integrated land use, higher crop yield, and irrigation schemes. In pursuit of these goals, several large-scale integrated rural development programs, covering one fifth of the country's land area, had been put into operation.

This eventually made many Malawians be self-employed. But the policies seemed to be short-lived such that towards the beginning of the 90s, people started to see very little benefit in the agricultural industry. Hence, many abandoned their hoes and moved into towns and cities to seek for employment so as to try to make ends meet. In 1992 due to political unrest, the donors froze aid such that it brought an unacceptable growth of the budget deficit. Such discipline weakness led to the great deterioration of the economy characterised by an overall sharp inflation that was experienced in the country. We hoped for an economic recovery after the new government came to power in 1994--but up to now, there has been very little progress. The result of all this, has been unemployment and other social problems, some people have been retrenched in the civil service. People have resorted to some other ways of making ends meet such as; theft, robbery, corruption, grabbing etc. some have ventured into the business of prostitution especially the youth and the single mothers. This in return, has brought untold misery in the Malawi society. There has been an increase in number of AIDS cases, an increase in number of orphans and an increase in poverty. These are some of the reasons that brought the birth of MIRACLE project in Karonga to try to tackle some of these problems in the district.

## **2.4 LABOUR FORCE IN MALAWI**

It is estimated the population of Malawi 3 million in 1964, 5.0275 million in 1974, 7.155 million in 1984, 9.01825 million in 1994 and 9619075 million in 1997. However, besides this increase in population, there is a high decline of mortality due to disease i.e. AIDS. Though population was increasing from 1964 to 1997, it is said the population growth rate has decreased tremendously due to the AIDS pandemic.

The table is showing the labour force of Malawi.

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>POPULATION</b>
<b>1964</b>	<b>3,000,000</b>
<b>1974</b>	<b>5,002,750</b>
<b>1984</b>	<b>7,015,500</b>
<b>1994</b>	<b>9,018,250</b>
<b>1997</b>	<b>9,619,075</b>

Source: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1999

Present labour force statistic in Malawi suggests an annual increase on the order of 2.2% during the 1980's and approximately of 2.5% in the 90's. The projections for the year 2000 were that there would be 2.5 million job seekers in Malawi a total of 26% of the entire population.

Now, if on one hand the labour force is rapidly increasing in the whole of Malawi, on the other hand, due to the problem of unemployment, the rate of the economically active population is decreasing.

### **2.4.1 Male Economically Active Population**

In Malawi, there has been a general decline of male activity rates in all age groups during the past twenty years 1980-2000. The male economic activity has decreased from 51.4% in 80's to 50.7% in the 90's.

The decline is slight between the ages of 25 and 44 and it has become even sharper for the younger males. One factor that has contributed greatly to this decline is the increase of school attendance. Most people have become aware of the importance of education and hence, prefer school to working in the garden or doing any other kind of jobs. See the table below.

### **MALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURE IN MALAWI**

(IN PERCENTAGE)

1950	1970	1980	1990
56.0	53.7	51.4	50.7

SOURCE: WORLD BANK 1996

### **2.4.2 Female Economically Active Population**

The female economically active population, as well as male economically active population, have been experiencing a continued decline in activity rates at all ages as development progresses. The female economically active population declined from a rate of 39.3% in 80's to 37.9% in the 90's.

## **FEMALE LABOUR PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURE IN MALAWI**

(IN PERCENTAGE)

1950	1970	1980	1990
53.7	50.9	49.3	47.8

SOURCE: WORLD BANK, 1996.

The data reflects a fall of active participation of women in agriculture, to non-agricultural activities such as kiosks, "kaunjika" selling (selling of second hand clothes). Most of them have abandoned their farms. It is clear that one of the major problems that Malawi is facing at the moment is the critical issue of unemployment. It is a real burden for Malawi, a problem which must be solved if Malawi is to avoid catastrophic consequences in the near future. Some of the catastrophic experiences would be:

### **(a) Food shortage**

People are leaving their good farms for town and city life, all in search of employment. In these towns, everything needs money i.e. food, clothing, house rent, medication etc. People are more and more concentrating themselves in these areas, where at the moment it is survival of the strong. These people are rushing to town and cities, because what they are yearning for cannot be found in the rural areas and because of that in chapter three, we have talked at great length about the need for having the rural area developed.

### **(b) Deviant behaviour**

When life becomes unbearable, people think of other means of making ends meet. Lack of employment will compound things like; prostitution, an increase in robbery/theft and swindlers, corrupted behaviour etc.

### **(c) Nepotism syndrome**

Some people have already said that blood is thicker than water. This is what happens when the problem is not attended with an immediate solution. As we are discussing this topic, there is already an increase in terms of nepotism in Malawi. Some top managerial persons are having the entire village in the company or government department. Once a person from a particular tribe or ethnic group is the boss, he or she employs all people from that particular area. The unfortunate thing is that they end up employing incompetent persons who end up ruining the economy of the country.

## **2.5 UNEMPLOYMENT: A YOUTH PROBLEM.**

If we have a look at the table on page 35 which shows the age structure of the labour force, immediately we come to realise that there has been an increase of the labour force from the year 1970 to the year 1990 at the age between 20-29 while from 30-39, there has been a decrease.

This then clearly shows that the category, which is suffering from the unemployment problem, is more of the youth type.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, looking at some surveys carried out during the 60's and 70's, it is possible to see that urban

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<sup>26</sup> Ghai, Dharam. Promoting Youth Employment: Policies and Programmes, 1988, p.4.

unemployment rates were typically at least twice as high as rural areas.<sup>27</sup> Another feature, which shows the gravity of the problem, is the tendency of unemployment to rise with level of education, up to the secondary level. For example;

*"In Malawi the unemployment rate for urban males increased from 6.6% among those who attended school to 9.6% among those with primary school and 12% for those with secondary education."<sup>28</sup>*

As we can see, the largest number of the unemployed seem to be that of youth ranging from the ages 18 to the early 30's. Over 70% of the youth have migrated to urban areas for white-collar jobs.<sup>29</sup> However, many end up as casual workers, doing (informal jobs) or manual work, like their companions without education. In his address to the youth some three years ago, Pope John Paul II talked of the relationship between education and work. He said there is an emergence of a very serious problem of its own nature. By this, he was referring to unemployment. The pope said the problem was the lack of jobs that in various ways is causing difficulties to young people.

The seriousness of the problem should be a reminder to the government of Malawi and all those responsible for the economy and development of the country that work is a human right, and it is therefore to be guaranteed by ensuring that it receives the most constant care and by centering economic policy on making sure that sufficient jobs are created for everyone especially for the young, who so often are the victims of unemployment today. We are all convinced that work is a good thing for man, a good thing for his humanity, because through work man not only

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<sup>27</sup> In Malawi, the male unemployment rate in the age group 20 to 24 was 9.8% in urban areas compared with 3.7% in rural areas. (Ibid. 5).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid p.9.

<sup>29</sup> George Mwangi. Unemployment sparks Africa's Youth. Nairobi: AAPS, 1995, p1

transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfilment as a human being and indeed, in a sense becomes more a human being.

## AGE STRUCTURE OF LABOUR FORCE

### PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION ACCORDING TO AGE GOUPS

1970						1990					
<u>Age</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Age</u>
10 -	20 -	30-	40 -	50-	60	10-	20-	30-	40-	50-	60
19	29	39	49	59		19	29	39	49	59	
24.8	27.1	19.7	13.4	8.9	6.0	22.7	27.5	19.6	14.0	9.1	7.2

SOURCE: World Bank, 1996

## 2.6 IMPACT OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN KARONGA DISTRICT

If you happen to be in Malawi and Karonga in particular, one can easily feel the hard impact that unemployment has brought on the people. The effects are evident in the poor living standards of people. Some of the critical effects of unemployment are:

### 2.6.1 POVERTY

There are conflicting views about individual responsibility for poverty. Some people believe that poverty is a symptom of societal structure and that some people will always be poor. These people feel that poverty is beyond the control of those who experience it. Other people feel that the poor intentionally behave in ways that cause or perpetuate their poverty. For instance, if people voluntarily choose to use

drugs and this leads them to poverty, it can be argued that they are to blame for their situation. However, such an argument cannot completely explain cases in which poverty leads to drug dependence.

While income and skills can be measured fairly easily, other definitions of poverty are based on a more subjective concept. A basic subjective definition of poverty is that people are poor if they believe they do not have enough resources. Studies have shown, for example, that when people say they are poor, they tend to spend more on basic goods, such as food, and less on discretionary items, such as televisions or cars. Other subjective definitions of poverty focus on people's quality of life.

In addition, many people in Malawi blame cycles of poverty, or the tendency to remain poor, on overly generous welfare programs. Supporters of this position, include some politicians, who argue against government spending and initiatives to help the poor. They believe that these programmes provide incentives for people to stay poor in order to continue receiving payments and other support, dependency syndrome.

#### **2.6.1.0 CONSEQUENCE OF POVERTY**

Poverty has wide-ranging and often devastating effects. Many of its effects, such as poor nutrition and physical health problems, result directly from having too little income or too few resources. As a result of poor nutrition and health problems, infant mortality rates among the poor are higher than average, and life expectancies are lower than average. Some effects of poverty may include infectious disease, mental illness, and drug dependence. Other effects of poverty are not as easily understood. For example, studies link poverty to crime, but by no means are all poor

people also criminals. In many cases, the primary effects of poverty lead to other problems. Extended hunger and lack of employment, for instance, may lead to depression, which may sometimes contribute to criminal behaviour.

The most common disorders associated with poverty are depression and anxiety disorders. Without meaningful, well-paying work and the resources and social affirmation that come with it, many poor people develop low self-esteem and feelings of worthlessness. People who are stressed by the uncertainty of where they will get their next meals or spend the night often develop high anxiety. Because the poor experience high rates of severe mental illness, they also have high rates of suicides. Some poor people attempt to relieve feelings of anxiety and depression associated with poverty through the use of mind-altering drugs. A common drug among the poor is alcohol, which is legal and affordable. Most men and women drink a lot in Malawi in the name of killing boredom. Karonga is one of the worse districts where men drink too much. Many of those who drink beer develop alcoholism, becoming physically and emotionally dependent on drink.

Mental illness and drug dependence demonstrates the difficulties of distinguishing between poverty's cause and its effects. Mentally ill and drug-dependent people tend to fall into poverty. This is what is happening at the moment in Malawi. The same people have difficulties in lifting themselves out of poverty.

Another point to note is that when people do not have work, they do not earn money; thus, high unemployment leads to high levels of poverty. Availability of employment tends to escalate, creating periods of high joblessness. In Malawi, with its high population--though now declining due to AIDS--unemployment levels of only a few percentage points means that thousands of working-age people cannot find

work and earn an adequate income. Because unemployment figures indicate only the number of people eligible to work who have no job but are seeking employment, such figures are not necessarily an accurate indicator of the number of people living in poverty. Other people may not be able to find enough work or may earn wages too low to support themselves. This is a typical situation of things in Malawi. Because of this economic hardship, most young girls and single mothers have opted for prostitution hence, escalating AIDS and Orphanhood.

### **2.6.1.1 AIDS**

The findings reported here are part of a broader project with gossip about AIDS in Malawi, related to its cultural context. It has been recognised that local cultures can have important consequences for the pattern of HIV transmission. The researchers examined many aspects, but it is not surprising that a considerable amount of data were collected upon the activities of prostitutes and bar girls.

In Karonga district, the area of this study, some girls and mothers would be seen seated and drinking with customers and try to attract attention, with the hope of further progress towards a lucrative sexual encounter. From time to time the topic of AIDS cropped up, and comments were collected on the reason why the bargirls continued despite the risk. The quotations, which follow, are generally representative. Many that I talked to gave several reasons at once. But by far the most important reason was that of immediate need satisfaction just because they had no employment:

" I stay in the bar only for money. I would starve if I stopped promiscuous behaviour" (bar girl outside of Chibuku Tavern).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Harriet Nyondo Barmaid interviewed on 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2000.

"I cannot stop going to bed with men. Who will feed my children? Because that is the only way I can earn my living" (prostitute in the group of three).<sup>31</sup>

While the world is raising an alarm on the dangers of AIDS, some of the prostitutes in Malawi raised their concern that the threat of AIDS was ruining their business:

"It is worrying because most people now say that AIDS is spread by bar girls, and that it is in bars that AIDS is found. There is little money for our business nowadays, compared to previous old days when the subject was not on everyone's lips. Most of the men nowadays are afraid of having sex with us. But it is a lie that AIDS is found in bars and that we are carriers of AIDS. People are just spreading the news to spoil our business..."<sup>32</sup>

Some however, were unconcerned because they felt or knew they had AIDS:

"We are sure we already have AIDS, and we cannot stop going around with any man. What we want is money" (bar girl in group of two at Chibuku Tavern).<sup>33</sup>

Others on the other hand are willing to use condoms but said that the problem was lack of money to buy them and in addition, condoms are not available. And Alice had this to say on condoms:

"Condoms are expensive and are not always available, but in any case there are many ways of getting AIDS and that the use of condoms cannot be followed, because they are not always available"

All this has brought untold misery to many families in Malawi. The level of orphanhood has doubled or even tripled for the past ten years.

### **2.6.1.3 ORPHANS**

The number of orphans has increased drastically since 1980. Some people do not seem to worry about it. Especially the parents who up to now have continued behaving promiscuously. They all seem to blame the escalation of poverty as a

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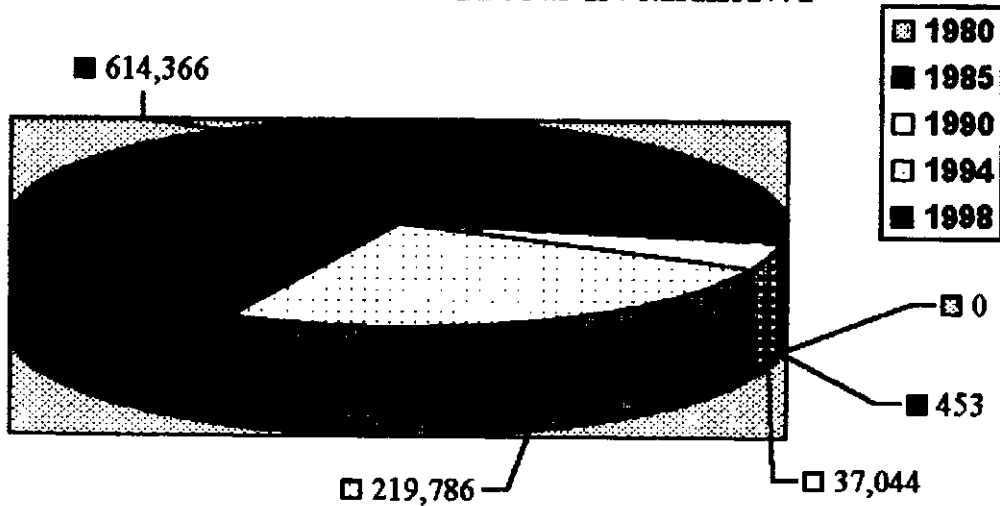
<sup>31</sup> Nyachavula, A widow interviewed by the Felix 16<sup>th</sup> July 2000, Karonga.

<sup>32</sup> Margaret Chimimba, A barmaid interview by Malawi Broadcasting Co-operation, (MBC), Evening News 7:00 PM, 16<sup>th</sup> July 2000. Blantyre.

<sup>33</sup> Alice Mwalwanda, interviewed by Felix 17<sup>th</sup> July 2000, Karonga

reason to their conduct. It is however unfortunate most people are unable to understand the dangers of AIDS.

### ORPHAN PROJECTIONS IN MALAWI



Source: District Health Inspector's Office, Karonga

GOM uses the following definition of an "orphan": *An orphan is a person under the age of 18 and has lost one or both parents.* This definition is however not widely accepted because traditionally an orphan is regarded as a person who has lost the mother or both parents; this traditional definition includes both children and adults. Orphans have always been there in all generations. In the past the extended family system, took care of them and orphans used to face problems apart from the emotional loss of their parents. The number of orphans was relatively low.

Change of cultural lifestyles, poverty and values however have weakened the extended family system, and together with the tremendous increase orphans, this has made things become very difficult for the present traditional care. As a result, orphans are neglected, not assisted adequately or even completely abandoned.

Unless people change their promiscuous behaviour, the number of orphans will continue to increase yearly. Apart from the information given in the table above, it was estimated that by year 2000, there would be between 1,000,000 and 1,300,000 orphans in the country most of them due to AIDS epidemic. And the World Health Organisation states that most children of HIV mothers are orphaned within 5 to 10 years. When they are orphans, whether by AIDS or other diseases or calamities, they are deprived of natural love, care, food, shelter, physical protection and guidance. The orphans lack all necessities of life that parents provide to their children. It is in view of these concerns that M.I.R.A.C.L.E exists in the area of Traditional Authority (T.A) Kyungu in Karonga district of Northern Malawi. The project caters for those orphans above 18 in trying to train them to be independent.

#### **SUMMARY**

In this chapter, we have defined the concept of unemployment and have also shown how the problem of unemployment came about. In the social analysis we have tried to show how the phenomena has affected the local people. It has also been mentioned that the problem has several causes.

The issue of unemployment is a complex and a very "hot" reality in Malawi. It is not surprising, that in Malawi with its limited resources and low income per person, the problem of unemployment affects primarily the poor who constitute the major part of the employment problem. Another category, which is highly affected by the problem of unemployment, is the youth category. Youth in Malawi are the most exposed people to the consequences of unemployment, since often the present educational system does not help them to find a new solution to employment. Another thing to note is that, youth in Malawi, make up between 60% and 65% of the total population and youth unemployment is a powerful destabilising force.

**From the information available, we can say that the unemployment problem is serious and growing and can really become an explosive bomb for Malawi if nothing is done. The next chapter is going to look into the theological reflection, the social teachings of the church and some possible ways of handling unemployment problem.**

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS AND THE SOCIAL TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH ON UNEMPLOYMENT AND SOME WAYS OF HANDLING THE PROBLEM**

#### **3.0 INTRODUCTION**

Money is a medium of exchange. Money is the key to everything and a source of income to everyone. People in all forms of employment earn it. Money is used and helps sustain people's lives. It enhances a suitable atmosphere for living, namely, to obtain food, clothing, health care, etc. It is an element upon which every success and future security is based.

Today, parents invest heavily in the education of their children, which is concretely seen as an escape from rural poverty and a preparation for a moderate sector job. However, the greatest problem facing youth is unemployment. The education system and its expansion have generated school leavers' problems with profound implications in both education and unemployment as has been discussed and illustrated with statistics in chapter one. The fact remains that the creation of employment will be the main step to solve this economic problem in the future.<sup>34</sup>

The impact of unemployment in Malawi is affecting everybody, college and university graduates, as well as other school leavers and even the illiterates. As a result, the youths are frustrated and torn apart. The problem of unemployment is not only for Malawi, but also a biblical one. It is well illustrated in Matthew 20:1-16. Unemployment is a problem for the youths, whether they find themselves in urban or rural areas. In urban areas, such as Lilongwe, Blantyre, and Mzuzu, thousands of unemployed youth move from shanties and slums situated in places like Kawale,

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<sup>34</sup> UNESCO, The third Development Plan, *unpublished Thesis, part 1*, 1974-1978

Ndilande, Chiwabvi, Zolozolo, Chiputula and many other such areas. Each morning you see them walking towards the city centre, to industrial areas, Indian shops, street corners, privately owned houses and institutions, construction sites in search of work, with the hope that they will earn something like a hundred Kwacha to enable them to buy a meal for the day. Most girls ask for opportunities to be housemaids and baby-sitters. These girls can even be former leavers. These people opt for these kinds of job not out of choice, but desperation due to lack of employment, and unsuitable financial conditions of the entire country.

Although Mt. 20: 1-16 illustrates Jesus' teaching about the rewards of the kingdom, which is placed in the context of work, employment and unemployment, how the employer rewards his employees both generously and without discrimination. This employer represents God. It is within this context that the parable has relevance in this study, based on unemployment in Malawi.

### **3.1 BACKGROUND OF MT. 20: 1-16**

The parable of Mt. 20: 1-16 tells us the story of the owner of a vineyard who has employed men at different times in the day and at the end of that day, paid them equally. Matthew understood the owner of the vineyard as being God<sup>35</sup> who pays equally without discrimination. For God the reward is the eternal life. Matthew also relates the parable with the "first" and the "last." Those who were employed last were paid first and those employed first were paid last. The phrase did not have much significance, except to make those who worked a whole day see how much those who were employed last received. It also has an eschatological implication.

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<sup>35</sup> J.C Fenton, *The Gospel of St. Matthew*, 1963, p 319.

The parable describes what frequently happened in Palestine during the time of Jesus. The vineyard was a large property owned by one landowner. The grapes were ready and the harvest began around September. If the harvest was not completed before the rains came, then the grapes were ruined and destroyed. To complete the harvest in due season or time, the landowner hired additional workers to finish the work.<sup>36</sup> They would stay the whole day if they were not employed. These persons, although they stood in the market place, were not street-corner idlers, lazy or spent their time wastefully. The market place was equivalent to the labour exchange offices. What this parable shows is that these people who stood in the market place were waiting for work and really need it. That could be the reason why some would stand until evening.<sup>37</sup> There were other categories of these unemployed who came around mid-afternoon and in the evening when the day was almost over. However, the employee's method looks odd. As a tradition, the Palestine landowners used to pay a denarius each for a whole day of work.<sup>38</sup> Barclay William observes that the unemployed in the market place were not attached to any group of workers or system. They did not choose what to do but accepted the job, which was readily available. They were always unemployed and therefore were living on semi-starvation period. Supposed they were to stay without job, it would mean that their families would sleep hungry. Therefore, for them one day without employment was a kind of disaster.<sup>39</sup>

It is with such background that the landowner was able to get labourers at dawn, the 9<sup>th</sup> hour, noon, mid-afternoon and evening to work in his "shamba."

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<sup>36</sup> Francis W. Beare, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 1981, p 401-402

<sup>37</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, vol. 2, 1975.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

### 3.2 EXEGESIS OF THE PARABLE

The core of the parable is the mercy that God has on his people. And the parable, focuses on the reward that God will give each person, and this reward is God's Kingdom. Behind the parable, we are also made aware of the situation of workers in Palestine. The lesson drawn from it is about the generosity of God.

**Verse 1** "...the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner going early in the morning to hire labourers for vineyard."

The kingdom of heaven is like... is a formula which does not mean that the kingdom is like a householder, but that it is like the reckoning which the house holder makes at the end of the day.<sup>40</sup>

**Verse 2** "after agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard..."

\* The usual daily wage was a denarius. This was the wage an agricultural worker could receive and this would help him sustain his family. This helped the worker provide the necessities of life to his family.<sup>41</sup> Although the standard pay was a denarius a day, the worker could make a bargain with the employer on any terms and the employer could get workers to accept the job.<sup>42</sup> But in this parable there is no bargain and the workers comply to what the employer requested them.

"vineyard" is a symbol of Israel, cf. Isaiah 5, Jeremiah 2:10.

**Verses 3-7** when he went about nine o'clock, he saw others standing in the market place, and he said to them; you also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right. So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock, he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' they said to him, 'because no one has hired us.' He said to them 'you also go into the vineyard.'

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<sup>40</sup> J.C Fenton, 1963, p 320

<sup>41</sup> W.F Albright and C.S Mann. *Matthew*. 1971, p 237.

<sup>42</sup> Francis W. Beare, 19981, p 402.

The Jews had their day divided into twelve hours of more or less equal length, running from dawn to dusk.

*"This is how their day was divided: Dawn, nine in the morning, noon and mid-afternoon an hour or so before sundown"- literally, " at the third, the sixth, ninth and the eleventh hour."*<sup>43</sup>

It was something common to find people who were unemployed, looking for work at the crossroads and market place. The owner of the vineyard went out five times and each time he found people and hired them to work in the vineyard. Logically speaking, the ones employed for an hour would work the shortest time possible.

" Jesus does not explain how the workers of the eleventh hour came to miss the householder with his continuing offers of work, the point of the story is not that. It is rather that right up to the eleventh hour the man was ready to take on workmen and that at that very time he sent his final batch to the vineyard."<sup>44</sup>

The landowner gave equal work opportunity to those in the market place as well as those found "idle". The fact that the landowner hired the workers even at the last hour of the day indicated that it was the peak season to pick grapes. The latest hour of the day showed that there was great urgency for the labourers to complete the work before nightfall. Therefore it is evident that the last comers also had suffered from unemployment.

**Verse 8** "when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first."

Just because nothing was said about their pay, it would be assumed that the master would pay them fairly. At the end of the day, the master instructed the

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Leo Morris, The Gospel According to Matthew. 1992, p500

manager to pay each worker beginning with those who came at the end and ending up with those who came first.

The order of payment had no special importance except that it allowed the question of those who worked the whole day to come up and complain. If those employed early were paid first, they could not have seen the payment of the last group and so would not have complained.

**Verses 9-11** "when those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual wage. Now when the first came, they thought that they would receive more, but each of them received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying " these last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat."

Those employed first complained about the generosity of the master. The employer made an agreement to pay them a denarius each. But during the payment, they felt treated unfairly, therefore unjustly. But besides all the dissatisfaction, they too received their daily wage as promised by their employer before they were hired to work on the vineyard. This murmuring reflects that of the Jews in the wilderness during their exodus from Egypt to the promise land under the leadership of Moses, cf. Exodus 16:3-8.

The employer is not only generous, but he is also free to do whatever he wills with his property. This is a typical life situation of things in our present Malawi and Karonga in particular. There are days when one is lucky and secures a job. But there are also some days when everything seems dry--that is lack of jobs--the whole day.

**Verses 13-15** "but he replied to one of them, 'friend, I am doing you no wrong, did you not agree with me for the usual wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you.' "

**Verse 13** "I do no wrong." The manager did not commit any injustice. He carried out the directions of the master as he was instructed. **Verse 14** "Take what is

yours." This is a classic reflection of justice, namely, to render to each his own due. This was actual justice and justice is a virtue of social institutions, as truth is of system of thought. Verse 15 the reverse of fortune is attributed to the generosity and kindness of God, his love for the most needy, not to any class vindictiveness.<sup>45</sup>

If the parable refers to the Pharisees and their grumbling at the way Jesus treats the sinners, outcast, the poor and rejected with the same mercy and he treats the Pharisees with indifference, yet it is the same Pharisees now who have born the law.<sup>46</sup> The opposite action of Jesus is what many Jewish leaders did not like. Especially the Pharisees were shocked at Jesus' generosity to sinner.

When unemployment last for long period of time, it affects and damages the psychological health of the persons involved. Some people when things prove to be tough end up committing suicide. Lack of job makes many people feel useless in the society. They feel that they are not contributing to the development of their nations. The words of Pope Pius XI elaborate a lot on the consequence of unemployment. The Pope says;

"now unemployment, particularly if widespread and of long duration...is a dreadful scourge, it causes misery and temptation to the labourers, ruins the prosperity of the nations and endangers public order, peace and tranquillity in the country and the world over."<sup>47</sup>

### **3.3 THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN TRYING TO TACKLE UNEMPLOYMENT**

Governments are the primary source of development in any country and it then follows that it is the same governments that are primarily responsible for the

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> J.C Fenton, 1963, p 321.

<sup>47</sup> Pope Pius XI, On Social Reconstruction, ch. 4, Par. C 19, 1931.

problem of unemployment. However, other organisations such as the NGO's and the Church have a role to play in curbing the unemployment problem.

The Church, following the teachings in the Old Testament and of Christ, has a right and duty to help people and the government find new ways and strategies in order to alleviate the current unemployment issue so that the people's dignity is restored, the dignity that comes with an occupation i.e. employment.

### **3.3.1 the Social Teachings of the Church**

The church states clearly that employment is the main source of income for most people--if not everyone. It is from earnings that one is able to have purchasing power, obtain food, clothing, education and many other things, which are necessities that lead to a decent lifestyle. The Church states that the book of Genesis provides the theological foundation of all human responsibilities regarding work. Since God creates humans in his own image and likeness (Gn.1.27), they are to share in his own creative work by procreating offspring and ruling subpersonal creation: "God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth'" (Gn 1.28; cf. Ps 8:5-8. Sir 17: 1-4). Therefore, human persons should work because they are called to share in God's activity and continue his work of creation (*Gaudium Et Spes* 34). Hence the Church states that:

"Unemployment takes away people's ability to provide for their needs and excludes them from participation in the economy."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Charles K. Welber, *Employment and Unemployment.* In Dwyer, Judith A. eds. *Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought*, 1994, p. 330.

Because of this reason, this has been the concern of the Catholic Church. Since the release of the first encyclical of Leo XIII, entitled *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, up to the very last one *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* by John Paul II, 1987, the Church has tried to tackle this very critical problem which affects not only Malawi and Karonga but many poor countries of the so called Third World. Encyclicals, pastoral letters, articles by the clergy, lay religious and Christians, when addressing the social problem of unemployment, all state and emphasise that employment is a basic right and should be protected<sup>49</sup>. In trying to find the root cause of unemployment, John Paul II in his encyclical, *Laborem Exercens* 1981, he points out that one of the major problems is, "in the way we view the economy and therefore how we have structured it - automatically, oriented to self-interest, measuring quality of life by material benefit and a commodity mentality."

In Malawi, the economic systems have failed perhaps because we have put too much emphasis on material profit rather than on the importance and centrality of the person. We might have failed by losing sight of the importance of work as means for all people throughout the world to satisfy their necessities and find fulfilment in life. John Paul II continues by emphasising the fact that labour is not only a factor of production or an instrument in order to increase it. The number of jobs must not be determined by the necessity of the market and the level of unemployment should not be left to the rules of the market. The importance of work is that work brings fulfilment in humans. This means then that we have to revise the rules of the market, looking much more at the person and his or her dignity, rather than the profit. In *Pacem In Terris*, John the XXIII states clearly that every human being has the right to life, bodily integrity, and to the means which are suitable for the proper development

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<sup>49</sup> The social teachings of Pope John Paul II, 1987, p 23.

of life; these are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and finally the necessary social services. Therefore a human being also has the right to security in case of sickness, inability to work, widowhood, old age, unemployment, or in any other case in which he is deprived of the means of subsistence through no fault of his own.

Employees are used in order to accomplish the main target of most government, NGO's, and other companies, so as to multiply profits. Therefore, we think it is the duty of every firm to protect its workers against abuses and other form of exploitation. But actually the opposite is true, there is a great deal of abuse and exploitation of people and resources in the employment sectors. Unfortunately, the government that is there to protect has done very little to address the problem or we can even say that the government has done nothing to alleviate the problem. Hence, most people created their own means of survival, which are not so good. Some have moved into plunder, prostitution and other deviant behaviour. The Kenya Episcopal Conference strongly stressed that employment is important and is a right for everyone because it helps in the preservation of the natural family set up. The Conference said that;

**"Employment is necessary so that a family be self-sufficient and maintain its dignity and self-respect...get just wages so that the menfolk are not are not obliged to go to the towns and cities in search of employment. This often caused the family breakdown."**<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Kenya Episcopal Conference, Family and Responsible Parenthood, 1979, p.8

### **3.3.2 the church is called to act**

Employment should be a priority of every government economic policy and the government should play an important role in carrying out such a policy. But we can question, what has the Church done in a way to address the problem? The Church has done quite a number of things in Malawi. The Church has built a good number of vocational training institutions and the recent one being MIRACLE Technical School in the heart of Karonga and there are several other high schools country wide. Unfortunately, the Church has limited resources, so we cannot rely very much on the church. Many young people have been trained in these schools--especially the high schools--but these did not respond to the real problems. The students would leave school without having any chance of securing a job, just because their preparation was not so practical. This is what made the Church move towards vocational training schools.

We can talk of the governments at great length, but at times in our Catholic Institutions and Religious Houses, we are the first to exploit and perpetuate exploitation, nepotism, and corruption towards our workers. We can easily talk of the outside while leaving the decay in our houses as religious. We religious have a greater role to play in challenging oppressive structures over workers and their rights. Rather than being guided by the capitalistic mentality, we should be the first to live and put into practice Christ's teachings and the social teaching of the Catholic Church.

If the church is to engulf the problem of unemployment, it has to look into the following areas:

- 1. The Church has to continue denouncing the wrong doings of the governments just as it did in 1992 in Malawi through the pastoral letter entitled "Growing in Faith." This was the time when Malawians were fighting for democratic changes. This means the Church has the right and the duty of challenging evil structures that are parasites to the people at grass root level--those who find it hard to make ends meet. The Church constantly makes sure that she addresses the question of injustice, nepotism and corruption, which are the main causative agents of unemployment especially for Malawi. The Church should not forget that it is the prophetic voice for the voiceless.**
  
- 2. Once diplomacy has failed, the Church should be in a position to take action. The Church should conscientise the people of the evil of unemployment and help people look for ways of dealing with the problem. The setting-up of co-operatives, involvement in developing the informal sector with small income generative projects, and attention to trade unions are some of the fields in which the Church should work, giving her wisdom, spiritual and technical support and advice. Another task of the church is to bring together, the unemployed and the state so that they can work together for a positive change that would reduce the unemployment problem.**

**In order to tackle the problem, the church should have well equipped personnel. If we look at the situation of our Catholic Church we have well informed priests and lay religious, but also we can find few priests, brothers, sisters, pastoral agents, and Christian communities who are not yet empowered and hence, unable to tackle such**

kinds of problems i.e. unemployment and other related social problem in our society. As things appear now, there is a gap in the training of the religious, pastoral workers and the real problems in the field.

### **3.4 THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN ADDRESSING UNEMPLOYMENT**

In dealing with the problem, it is better to get to the root cause of the plague. After a critical analysis of the unemployment problem, we have proposed the following that the government should look into seriously. We have tried to look for what might be possible for Malawi at the moment to address the issue beginning with:

#### **3.4.1 Industrial sector**

For the past twenty years, the industrial sector has been viewed as the only key factor towards generating economic growth and employment in most African countries and Malawi included. All this can well be realised when proper policies are effectively carried out. In so doing, the country can easily lift up her economic growth and that too can reduce the unemployment problem. Perhaps the two things that should be taken into account if we are to address the problem of unemployment in this sector are the small-scale enterprises and the type of technology. And these would work well as explained in the following page.

#### **(A) Small Scale Enterprises**

Malawi finds herself in a mess of unemployment and is searching for means and ways on how she can handle the situation. In order for her to arrest the situation so that it does not escalate, the government has to look into the area of small -scale enterprises.

**If we go into history, Malawi's industrial output has grown slowly in these past ten to fifteen years. Up to now, one can find very few industries with local products. But what we have is that most of the industrial sector is furnished with imported inputs with most of the capital coming from outside. Beside poor incentives, restrictive legislation--especially during the regime of the dictator, Dr. Kamuzu Banda--weak demand and marketing have further hindered the industrial development.**

**At this stage, we think that the Malawi government should set-up rules, policies, and laws, which will help in the development of small-scale enterprises, owned by Malawians, we do not need many large firms in Malawi at the moment. Large firms tend to have high levels of foreign capital invested, which cause capital flight through transfer and other activities. But on the other hand, small-scale enterprises would certainly help Malawi not only promote and generate jobs, but it will also boost the country's economy since most of the capital will remain in the country. The benefits of such small-scale enterprises are:**

**(a) Small-scale enterprises venture into new field works. The enterprise focus is primarily on how to find ways of answering the needs of the local people. In this way, it is possible to have a diversity of activities, made up of both the small and large firms, which eventually boost the country's economy.**

**(b) Small-scale enterprises bridge with the large firms. This helps the small enterprise to learn how to work in the marketing system and for the transfer of management and technical skills which are**

essential for any industry to run effectively, efficiently and productively. In so doing there can be generation of plenty of employment opportunities.

### **(B) Type of Technology**

In a world of quickness and efficiency, more and more machines are replacing people. However, we cannot run away from the world of technology if we are to compete with others on the international level. But before we make a move into the type of technology to use for African countries and Malawi in particular, there have to be priorities on the type of technology to adopt.

Since independence Malawi leaders thought that in order to achieve a fast economic development, the safest way was to imitate the industrialised countries, by bringing into the country all sorts of equipment and technological devices, forgetting that first all, Malawi was not prepared for this huge jump, with the consequence of finding herself full of unemployed people looking for jobs. This does not mean that Malawi should not look for ways of industrialisation or technological progress. We all know the positive effect of industrialisation on the growth of the country's economy. On the other hand, it is important to be convinced that industrialisation must be planned carefully with adequate policies, always looking for the benefit of the entire Nation. Right now the few industries we have are only benefiting the few people and some big political leaders who have a bigger hand in controlling them. If Malawi is to move towards improving the lifestyle of her citizens, priority should be given to the

workers. Her industrialisation must be implemented in such a way that it protects and empowers the workers and their contribution to the development of the country.

### **3.4.2 RURAL SECTOR**

Malawi's economy is basically agricultural. And most people in the country survive on their farm produce. Once the rains fail to come, the country goes into acute food and economic hardships. Also in Malawi, because of change of weather, people experience a lot of dry spells. It is for this reason that we find many people migrating into urban areas seeking greener pasture. These people are moving into urban areas that do not even have enough industries to absorb them. This has resulted in the growth of slums and unhygienic environments. The migration has caused a great increase on the unemployment problem. Because of this, we think it is important to develop the rural and agricultural sector in order to have urban unemployment effectively tackled.

We therefore think that the proposals for agriculture development should aim at the restoration of a proper balance between rural and urban income. The government should also check its development programmes, which generally favours the urban industrial sector rather than the rural agriculture.

Programmes need to be designed in order to increase facilities in rural areas such as electricity, piped water, clinics, good schools, nice roads, dams etc. in order to reduce the attraction to the cities, particularly for school leavers. Another area to look into should be the rural settlement schemes, attraction services, training centres and rural workers' projects are to be urgently designed and implemented in order to create rural employment opportunities. As Ndegwa and Pewelson say, such

programmes would reduce the urban-rural wage gaps and employment opportunities in two ways:<sup>51</sup>

(a) the individuals would be employed in such projects during non-peak periods in agriculture.

(b) the effects of the building of roads, irrigation systems, dams and other agricultural facilities required by such programmes would increase the agricultural production and create employment for the rural people.

With good planning on the side of the government and with the necessary financial aid it should not be difficult to set-up such rural projects which can provide new jobs and build the necessary infrastructure and facilities for the long-term development of the rural areas.

### 3.4.3 AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Malawi has no large deposits of minerals, therefore, we should take into account, the expansion of the agricultural sector which would play a big role in the country as one alternative of economic growth and the creation of jobs. After knowing the positive impact of the sector, then greater effort should be placed in it. Most agronomists and economics have argued that, *"as long as African Governments avoid premature tractor mechanisation, anti-export agricultural policies, authentic food policies, and an over-emphasis on Government capital-intensive direct production schemes, there is considerable potential for significant increases on labour absorption in the agricultural sector itself."*<sup>52</sup> The argument presented in the statement above is true, but we believe that with appropriate planning all these modern technologies can be

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<sup>51</sup> Philip Ndegwa, and John P. Powelson, 1973, p. 61.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p62.

made available and applicable to both the large and small firms and that is why we need a good choice of technology.

Right now, we are only ten million people and we have some very fertile land countrywide. We have for the past two years witnessed the impact of proper planning of the agricultural sector such that the government of Malawi was able to export some of its farm produce to other countries and Kenya included. This is what we need not only in Malawi, but also for the entire continent. We have to start moving towards being self-sustaining. What we need are proper priorities, good managers and leadership that is people centred.

Our people are running away from the rural home to urban area because of abject poverty in the rural area. They think the urban areas are the only place where one can enjoy the fruits of our independence. This is because our governments in Africa seem to concentrate much more in the urban than the rural areas. But it is the rural area that has about 70-80% of the country's population.

#### **3.4.4 TOURISM SECTOR**

This is one of the sectors that can create a lot of job opportunities in Malawi. For the past ten to fifteen years, the sector seems to have been doing not so badly-- but not to what is expected of it. Even though Malawi has very beautiful places such as: Kasungu National Park, Nyika National Park, Vwaza Game Reserve, Lengwe National Park, Majete Game Reserve, Lake Malawi National Park, etc.,. All these have wonderful plants and animal species, the tourism industry is not so developed. It sometimes seems as if the government is not interested in it or it does not have faith in the industry as the source of money and employment.

This sector, if it is to take off, has to be under the leadership of local agencies. Once this is done, it will help keep the generated capital within the boundaries of the country.

### **3.4.5 ART AND CRAFT SECTOR**

Karonga people and many others, countrywide, are talented in this sector. If taken into serious consideration, this can be one among other ways of job creation for many Malawians. As of now, few people are working on a full-time basis just because there is not full support from the government. There are no clear laws put in place to protect people in this business. Usually, due to lack of governing body of the art and craft, craft men and women, sell their products to foreigners at a cheaper price.

Now is the right time to start thinking seriously on how to boost the economy and create more job opportunities in this sector. Many foreign countries in the last few years have increasingly become interested in African crafts. This then is the great opportunity to promote our Malawian culture, and at the same time give our people new opportunity for employment and income.

### **3.4.6 EDUCATION SYSTEM**

Knowledge is power and it has also been described as the key to success for any dynamic business enterprise. Thus, to succeed, be it in a private or public industry, we need well-prepared members, possessing relevant qualifications and information at all levels. Education helps people acquire knowledge and develop skills, which enable them to implement decisions and be good managers. It is very important that the education system prepares competent and highly professional

people who can find jobs or be self-employed. The education system in Malawi--especially secondary school--is not helping young people in their preparation for future employment. School leavers are incapable of finding or creating any kind of job because the system does not offer them skills of any type.

Primary school education is free, but university education, has become the most expensive since 2000. Before, the poor were able to send their children to university, this time university education will only be for the rich and the middle class citizens. The education system should have the following objectives if we are to address the problem of unemployment.

**(a)** emphasis should be given to Vocational Training Institutes. And these schools should be well equipped so that they do not dissatisfy the young people expectations. Once their expectations are not met, they easily opt for classical studies with the hope and dream of securing a white-collar job in an office. It is therefore the responsibility of small and big enterprises to get together and start good technical schools with the aim of preparing young people to work in the sector in which they have prepared themselves. One such a good example is the MIRACLE technical school.

**(b)** The education system should lead to self-employment. It should be organised in such a way that it could be of great help to young people. It should train them into skills in both the agricultural and the industrial sectors. With their preparation, school leavers thereafter should be able to start new activities and enterprises in both formal and informal sectors.

A government, which wants its citizens well prepared and a nation internationally competitive, must invest a lot of money in education, creating all the necessary facilities for people to be professionally trained and skilled. One of the strategies for generating employment is through appropriate and serious education. Education as Dr. Banda used to say is the key toward building a nation's, economy and a move towards self-sustenance. It is again up to the government to study an economic policy, which will benefit the country rather than the multinationals. With the multinationals, instead of gaining and making profits, Malawi is paying heavily in terms of pollution, ecological disasters, and loss of lives. Good examples are the coal mining at Mchenga in Rumphi and Portland cement Company in Zomba.

### **3.5 Summary**

The problem of unemployment seems to have been there during the time of Jesus some two thousand years ago. No wonder he said the poor will be with you all the time. There was an unemployment problem as we find out the owner of the vineyard went out looking for employees and each time he found people.

Today, we still have the same problem. But I believe that there is some possible solution to the problem and that it is up to every person to find and use the possibilities. The problem of unemployment, like any other social problem, is the result of wrong national and international policies. The late Gandhi said, before we make any decision, we have to see to it that the decision will also favour the blind, lame, and all other people with disabilities. Therefore, the government and the Church have a role to play in addressing the problem. Whatever the strategies laid, they should aim at benefiting everybody not only the minority group of people in power, but every son and daughter of God.

### **3.6 GENERAL CONCLUSION**

The problem of unemployment is a major one and a reality for Malawi. Unemployment is a powerful destabilising force in a country because it prevents the person from taking off economically and from being self-supportive. As a consequence, it takes away human dignity and respect.

Jesus saw the problem of unemployment and that is why he brought about the parable of the workers in the vineyard in Matthew. Jesus puts the emphasis on the employer who goes out five times looking for people to work in his farm. The parable is deliberately in the context of work, and this shows how the employer was concerned about the lives of many potential workers.

This parable is a great challenge to all of us and it calls for action. Jesus is challenging us that we cannot always be looking at the problem, but that we have to move ahead in finding some necessary solution to some of our problems. It is in this context that every institution be it the Church or the government or any other must play its role in addressing the problem. This is a big challenge to ministers--especially social ministers who are geared at making our world a better place to live.

One of the hindrances to development is lack of growth in the production sector of the country. When there are no facilities to enhance development such as industries, and well managed local industries and many other activities that lead to positive economic growth of the country and can help solve the problem to some degree.

In most countries, Malawi included, for the past thirty years there has been some cheap political propaganda, that of divide and rule. Our leaders have tended to divert developments to area of their homes. For instance, in Malawi, most good things are

in the hands of politicians and not local people at grass root level. In Malawi, we need good leaders and good policies that will help in the development of the country and of the individuals.

As social ministers we are called to denounce injustice and learn to build the walls of justice. This is not an easy task, it can even cost our own lives. We should not remain silent or ignore the bad practices done by other people. As George Mwangi says:

"...the church is called to work towards eliminating exploitation, corruption, nepotism, favouritism and other vices that affect employment as well as opportunities..."<sup>53</sup>

We can be given capital, technical know-how, but if we still have bad policies and governance, we will not take off. There are structures that need to be corrected first before we talk of curbing the problem. However, as Professor Ali Mazrui thinks, "we cannot solve African problems with European solutions...African problems need African answers..."<sup>54</sup> We have the answers to our problems.

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<sup>53</sup> Mwangi George. 1995 p.1

<sup>54</sup> Mazrui Ali. The African Triple Heritage, 1996, p 57

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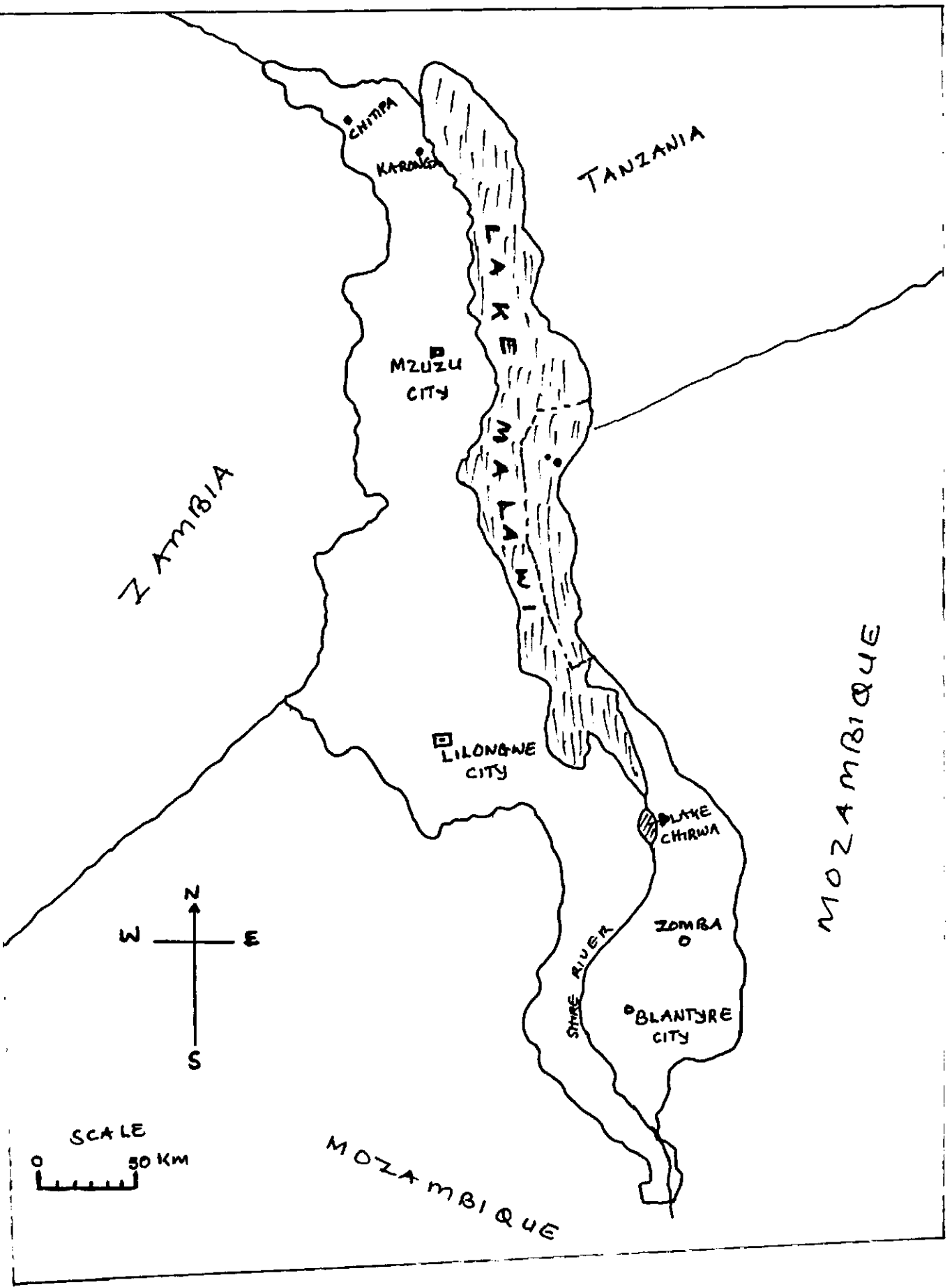
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Appendix 1

MAP OF MALAWI



Appendix 2

MAP OF NORTHERN MALAWI

