

Breaking the Yoke

Taking Action Against Poverty



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2011 Organization of African Instituted Churches

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All stories from OAIC staff personal conversations, Nairobi, October 2011. All names have been changed.



Organization of African Instituted Churches



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1 John 3: 17-18 "If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."



The eradication of extreme poverty and hunger is the first of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). To reflect this goal, the world comes together on October 17th to recognize the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. The Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) invites our Christian community to see the MDGs as "My Divine Goals". The concept of "My Divine Goals" reminds us of the calling by God to people of faith to engage in transformative ministry according to the passage in 1 John 3: 17-18 as well as other scriptures throughout the Bible.

To the world, October 17th is a day to listen and respond to those in poverty as they make their concerns heard and to recognize the efforts and struggles those living in poverty undergo each day.

OAIC believes the issue of poverty deserves more than just a day of recognition. Therefore, we have created this booklet to encourage church members to continue their involvement with this issue. This guide will not only help readers understand poverty on a national and global scale, but will also challenge the reader to...

Be Aware

Analyse

&

Take Action

...on the issues of poverty.

This guide covers six issues that link directly to the overarching topic of poverty in Africa. Each week, we ask you to incorporate the tools found here in order to educate congregations and encourage conversations about the church's role in this epidemic. On each page, you will find a breakdown of each issue, which includes the following:

Weekly Focus

Bible Verse – Incorporate this verse into sermons, prayers, bible studies or as a separate discussion with your congregation.

Story

OAIC spoke with members of our community to gather personal accounts of what it is like to live in poverty and how it affects our society. These stories help put a face to the statistics.

Challenges

The two challenges require people to either
a) step out of their comfort zone and analyse the issue on a more personal basis
or
b) encourage those living in poverty to address the situation

Facts

By sharing these facts with your congregation, members can get a better understanding of how severe poverty is in Africa.

P. O. V. E. R. T. Y.

Found at the end of each discussion, P.O.V.E.R.T.Y is an acronym that stands for Pray Often, Visualize, Educate, React, Talk and whY and is meant to serve as a reflection tool after the previous sections have been completed.

Week 1: Water & Sanitation

Isaiah 41:17 "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them."

Story

In Kibera, one of the largest informal settlements in Africa, water and sanitation are not seen as necessities, but luxuries. Even though water is critical to living a healthy life, people have made it their trade to sell the small amount of clean water that is available, ensuring that only those with money will have access. Even those who can afford water still struggle to find drinking water since some of the water being sold is taken from diverting pipes underground. This water can sometimes mix with the sewer lines or be taken from rivers where latrines (outdoor toilets) are emptied, causing those who consume it to be prone to water borne diseases.

Not only is sanitation an issue to water supply, but also to everyday living. Waste disposal oftentimes takes the form of "flying toilets". Despite the large number residing in Kibera, latrines are scarce and can be dangerous for women and children to visit at night. As a result, many people are forced to defecate in plastic bags and throw the waste outside, landing on houses, businesses and streets. Without basic water and sanitation, it is extremely difficult for a community to prosper.

Evidence shows that improved access to water and sanitation reduces poverty both directly and indirectly. In order to end poverty in our community, clean water and increased sanitation is crucial.



Challenge

Track how much water you use in one day for drinking, washing and cooking. Try to halve that amount the next day. In what ways is water vital to everyday tasks? What are some struggles you experienced when asked to cut down on water usage?

or

Choose one fact from the next page and discuss with neighbours, friends or church members. Have any elected officials addressed these problems in your community and if so, what has changed?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), for every \$1 USD invested in water and sanitation, there is an economic return of between \$3 and \$34 USD.

884 million people in the world do not have access to safe water. This is roughly one in eight of the world's population. (WHO/UNICEF)

Facts

In an informal settlement in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya, 91 percent of residents use wells as the main source of water for domestic consumption. One hundred percent of water from shallow wells in the community were contaminated with faecal matter.

(African Population and Health Research Centre Nairobi)

In Kibera neighbourhood people pay up to 30 times more per water unit compared to what middle and higher income residents pay. (Uwazi)

One in three children in the developing world – more than 500 million children total – has no access at all to sanitation facilities. (UNICEF)

P.O.

Pray Often – Reflect on the bible verse and what God says about the importance of water for all.

V.

Visualize – Water is vital to life yet millions of people live without this necessity. What are ways to provide that resource to everyone?

E.

Educate – Find more information to learn about the clean water and sanitation crisis in the world and what people are doing to solve it.

R.

React – Where in your area do people lack access to clean water and sanitation? What will you do to help alleviate this issue in your area?

T.

Talk – Discuss ways to make clean water and sanitation facilities universally available with your church, friends, community and family.

Y.

whY – Ask yourself why 1/8th of the world cannot afford or do not have access to safe water for drinking, cooking or bathing?

Week 2: Hunger

James 2:15-17 "Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

Story

Beatrice, a single mother of five, lives in Katuekera, an area of Kibera. In order to feed her children, Beatrice would wash clothes for a small fee. However, oftentimes there would be little to no need for her services and the lack of income meant she was not able to provide sufficient food for her five young children. In order to have enough to survive, her children would scavenge in dust bins and garbage dumps to find whatever morsels of food others had thrown away.

When congregants of the Holy Spirit Church of East Africa, an OAIC member church where Beatrice fellowshiped, heard of Beatrice's struggles, they pulled together the little that they had to support her and her family for a period of time. However, since there was no structured plan intact and the money was quickly spent on necessities, Beatrice felt her only option to support her family was to move in with an older man. Finding enough food for their family is a reality too many African mothers face, leading some to take drastic measures in order to keep their young ones from starvation.



Challenge

For those who can afford to eat three meals a day, have you ever felt hunger pains? If your health allows, try to skip one or two meals until feeling extremely hungry. Imagine if this feeling lasted for weeks - this is the reality millions of people face everyday. Donate what you can to an organization that provides food to those who are in need.

or

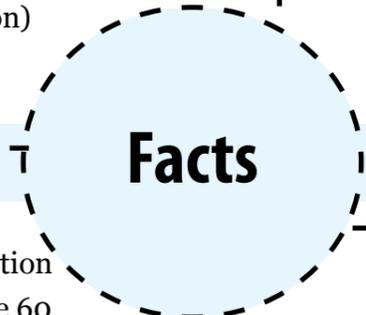
What are some ways of growing food in a congested community? Consider growing vegetables in sacks to provide for your family and others around you.

More than 200 million people – 23 percent of Africa's population - were undernourished in Africa between 2005 and 2007. (Food and Agricultural Organization)

Under nutrition contributes to five million deaths of children under the age of five each year in developing countries. (UNICEF)

In developing countries, malnutrition and hunger-related diseases cause 60 percent of deaths of children under the age of five. That adds up to 10.9 million children each year. (UNICEF)

Due to poor nutrition, it is estimated that up to 60 percent of children in Africa are anemic. (United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition)



P.O.

Pray Often – Pray for those who do not have enough food to meet their daily nutritional requirements.

V.

Visualize – About 15,000 children die each day in developing countries because of malnutrition and hunger. That is the equivalent to approximately three children dying each minute.

E.

Educate – Find out what the recommended calories and nutrients are for a child each day. Are the children in your community being provided with enough food to obtain these?

R.

React – What should be done so everyone in your country has enough and nutritious food? What can you do to alleviate hunger in your area or city?

T.

Talk – Discuss with your church, friends, community and family the inequality of those who have excess food while others cannot afford a single meal.

Y.

whY – If there are enough resources to feed the world's population, why are hunger and malnutrition continuing problems?

Week 3: Shelter

Isaiah 58:7 "Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter - when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"

Story

More than half of Nairobi residents live in informal settlements (slums) and the numbers continue to grow each day. Housing in most informal settlements are made of very old mabati (iron sheets) and are very closely built together. These structures can be extremely dangerous; if a fire were to occur, the entire neighbourhood is at risk of being destroyed and lives are put in jeopardy.

The October 2011 pipeline explosion that occurred in the informal settlement Sinai in Nairobi resulted in the deaths of over one hundred people and the whereabouts of some could not be established. Since there are no through ways for vehicles to pass through the settlement, fire brigades had great difficulty finding and saving residents in this tragic situation.



The rooms in this area cost as little as five hundred shillings (approximately \$5 USD) per month, but to many Kenyans these prices are still unaffordable. The deplorable conditions in these areas illustrate how poverty exposes those in informal settlements around Africa to highly dangerous conditions.

Challenge

Reach out to organizations in your community that provide shelter for those in need. Form a group of friends to spend a weekend building a house or gathering resources to give to a building project.

or

Read what your Constitution says about shelter and other basic needs. Are people in your community aware of these provisions? How do we hold elected officials accountable for the provisions that have not been implemented?

Less than 20 percent of households in Africa are connected to piped water and only 40 percent have access to water within 200 meters of their house. (UN Human Settlements Programme)

Households in cities of developing countries in Africa must spend an average of 12.5 times their annual income to buy a house. (United Nations and UN Human Settlements Programme)

Facts

It was estimated in 2007 that there were 250,000-300,000 children living and working on the streets across Kenya with more than 60,000 of them in Nairobi. (IRIN)

One out of every three city dwellers – nearly a billion people – lives in a slum. That number is expected to double in the next 25 years. (UN Human Settlements Programme)

Kenya's slum population is growing by almost six percent each year. Over half of Nairobi's population is crammed onto just 1.5 percent of the total land area. (Homeless International)

P0.

Pray Often – Pray for those living in inadequate shelters where conditions can be deplorable and unsafe.

V.

Visualize – A large percentage of people continue to live in inhumane conditions without basic amenities. An unreported amount have no form of shelter at all.

E.

Educate – Learn about housing rights in your country and what elected officials are doing to address these issues.

R.

React – What can be done to ensure people living in informal settlements have proper and adequate shelter? What is your church community doing?

T.

Talk – Talk within your community about local city planning and how to address government officials on this issue.

Y.

whY – Why do nearly a billion city dwellers not have formal housing? What steps can be taken to provide proper housing for all?

Week 4: Women & Children

Isaiah 10:1-3 "Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless. What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar?"

Story

After her father died of AIDS-related complications in 2007 and her mother succumbed to the same disease three years later, 17-year-old Wendy found herself as the head of the family and responsible for her three younger siblings. Subsequently, her relatives came and took all of her late parents' belongings. Wendy and her siblings were left with nothing and had no choice but to move from their home to one of the most deplorable informal settlements in Mombasa. Searching for ways to support her family, Wendy encountered men who would approach her in the guise of helping her, but with intentions of using her to satisfy their needs.

However, Wendy was able to escape the harsh reality of prostitution that many young girls face when having to provide for a family. Through a programme initiated by the OAIC and headed by Rev. David Muganda known as "Giving Hope and Youth Empowerment", Wendy was able to get back on her feet. With the help of funds from Church World Service (CWS) and OAIC, Wendy started selling chickens and groundnuts and went back to school to attend college. Inspired by the help she had received, Wendy went on to institute an organization called "Bamburi Giving Hope" where orphans now meet to raise funds in order to help them start projects, grow their business(es) and support the other members of their family.



Challenge

Spend one day reflecting on customs and traditions in your community that are not favorable toward women and children. How are these roles reinforced by society and the media?

or

Write down how many minutes it took you to read through the facts about women and children. Every minute a woman in the world dies in pregnancy or childbirth. Think about how many women died as you read through these facts and what our society can do to prevent these deaths.

Every minute, a woman somewhere dies in pregnancy or childbirth. This adds up to 1,400 women dying each day - an estimated 529,000 each year- from pregnancy-related causes. (UN Millennium Project)

Facts

Worldwide, 10.6 million children died in 2003 before they reached the age of five - this number is the same as the children population in France, Germany, Greece and Italy.

(Global Issues)

Between 12 and 14 million African children have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS.

(World Bank/UNICEF)

According to some estimates, women represent 70 percent of the world's poor. They are often paid less than men for their work, with the average wage gap in 2008 being 17 percent.

(UN Women)

For every 100 boys in Africa, there are only 83 girls enrolled in primary school.

(World Bank/UNICEF)

P.O.

Pray Often – Reflect on the bible verse and what God says about unjust laws and oppressive practices. Pray for women and children in areas where rape is used as a weapon of war.

V.

Visualize – Visualize the role that a woman plays on a day-to-day basis within her family and community. How can she be supported?

E.

Educate – Read and reflect on the role of women and children in your country's history. By learning about the past, it is easier to understand the present and predict the future.

R.

React – What can be done to reduce the effects of poverty on women and children? Ask yourself why the girl child is less educated than the boy child.

T.

Talk – Talk with others about your experiences as a man, woman or child and how your age or gender has influenced those.

Y.

whY – Why would strong women and children be positive for our society?

Week 5: Education

Proverbs 3:13-18 "A proper education will lead to the greatest satisfaction in life. Blessing, honor, long life, pleasantness, and peace are reserved for those who find true wisdom and understanding"

Story

In Sinai, an informal settlement neighbouring the industrial area of Nairobi, going to school was extremely difficult for a young boy named Juma. By the age of 4, Juma had experienced both his mother's and father's death and went to live with his grandfather. Though the child had gone through great misfortune and tragedy, Juma still managed to attend school. After a couple of years, his grandfather passed away and Juma went to live with his step-grandmother. However, since the woman already had several other children to take care of and could not afford to provide for Juma, he was left without a home or a guardian. As a 7-year-old living on the streets, it did not seem possible for Juma to attend school anymore.

Around this time, a Bishop of an African Independent Church came across Juma on the streets of Sinai. Juma began to tell the Bishop how he ended up with no home or family. Even though the Bishop and his family had meager resources, he took it upon himself to enroll the child in a boarding school so he could have both a home and an education. Juma is now 14 years old and performing well in school but because of the Bishop's limited resources he constantly faces the possibility that he may be unable to continue his education due to a lack of funds.



Challenge

Think of five things you have seen today. How would you have received that information if you could not read? How much more difficult is the other way of receiving information when you are unable to read?

or

What are the major challenges in the schools in your area? What steps can you take? Discuss with all stakeholders how to solve these problems.

In Kenya, more than one million primary-school-age children are not enrolled in primary or secondary school. (World Development Indicators Database)

In Sub-Saharan Africa more than 1 in 3 adults cannot read and 47 million youths (ages 15-24) are illiterate. (UNESCO Institute for Statistics)

A quarter of Kenya's adult population is illiterate (UN Statistics Division)

Facts

134 million children between the ages of 7 to 18 have never been to school. (CARE.org)

68 million primary-school-age children are still denied the right to universal education. (UNESCO Data Centre)

- P.O.** Pray Often – Pray that the quality of education would be the same for those in the city, rural areas and informal settlements.
- V.** Visualize – Imagine if you could not read the newspaper, a book, road signs or Sunday church bulletins. This is a reality many people face due to lack of education.
- E.** Educate – Find out the literacy level for your country and compare it to other surrounding countries. Learn what makes some country's literacy rates lower than others.
- R.** React – What can you do to improve literacy in Africa?
- T.** Talk – Discuss how education can lead to development of a nation.
- Y.** whY – Why is it that those that can afford to pay receive better education than those who cannot?

Week 6: Health

Ezekiel 34:3-4 "You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally."

Story

A majority of the people in Africa, especially those living in informal settlements or rural areas, face many challenges related to health care. When one requires urgent medical care, they typically have to make a difficult decision on where and how to be treated. If the person decides to be taken to a hospital to receive treatment, the journey can be long and the expense can be much more than their income. However, even though choosing a privately owned clinic might be more convenient and less expensive, patients risk being treated by local health workers who have inadequate training. It is not uncommon for wrong prescriptions to be given out, resulting in an even worse health condition for the suffering patient.

Mary, a resident of an informal settlement in Nairobi, faced this difficult decision when her daughter, Samantha, became ill. Initially, Mary took Samantha to several nearby clinics to save money but became worried when the prescribed medicines failed to improve the young girl's health. Praying for a solution, Mary finally took her daughter to Kenyatta National Hospital where Samantha was diagnosed with leukemia. Though she was relieved to have an accurate diagnosis, Mary found herself having to leave her job to take care of Samantha while struggling to make ends meet amidst massive medical bills. Even though Samantha was eventually able to receive care at Kenyatta National Hospital, the treatment comes at a heavy price for the family that lives in extreme poverty.



Challenge

Track how many kilometers from your home you have to walk or ride to reach the first health care facility. Health facilities should be no more than 8 km from your home. If the distance is longer, find out who is responsible for medical care in your community.

or

Are there free health consultations that happen in your community? If so, find out when and where these take place. Encourage at least five of your friends or family to accompany you to receive free medical treatment. If there are not any free consultations, contact a health organization about visiting your area.

Current estimates of maternal mortality ratios in Kenya are at least as high as 560 deaths per 100,000 live births.

(Reproductive Health)

On average, there is one doctor per 500 people in Nairobi but only one per 160,000 people in rural Turkana. (Total Company)

Facts

15 million children orphaned due to HIV/AIDS (which equals the children population in Germany or the United Kingdom).

(UNICEF)

Less than 20 percent of the population in Kenya has health insurance. (World Health Organization)

2.2 million children die each year because they are not immunized.

(UNICEF)

P0. Pray Often – Pray for those who are suffering but cannot afford proper health care treatment.

V. Visualize – Hundreds of thousands of people continue to die from illnesses that are treatable. Why?

E. Educate – Educate yourself and others on sanitation measures to avoid instances of diseases like diarrhoea and communicable disease that can be prevented.

R. React – What are some of the measures that we can do to ensure that we hold governments and individuals responsible for providing health care accountable so that universal health care is achieved?

T. Talk – Talk with friends about the importance of regular check-ups such as breast and prostate cancer, high blood pressure, HIV, diabetes and other illnesses.

Y. whY – Why is there a higher concentration of doctors per person in urban areas as opposed to rural areas?

Psalm 10

Why, Lord, do You stand far off?
Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?

In his arrogance the wicked man hunts down the weak, who are caught in the schemes he devises.

He boasts about the cravings of his heart; he blesses the greedy and reviles the Lord.

In his pride the wicked man does not seek Him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.

His ways are always prosperous; Your laws are rejected by him; he sneers at all his enemies.

He says to himself, "Nothing will ever shake me."

He swears, "No one will ever do me harm."

His mouth is full of lies and threats; trouble and evil are under his tongue.

He lies in wait near the villages; from ambush he murders the innocent.

His eyes watch in secret for his victims; like a lion in cover he lies in wait.

He lies in wait to catch the helpless; he catches the helpless and drags them off in his net. His victims are crushed, they collapse; they fall under his strength.

He says to himself, "God will never notice; He covers his face and never sees."

Arise, Lord! Lift up your hand, O God. Do not forget the helpless.

Why does the wicked man revile God? Why does he say to himself, "He won't call me to account"?

But You, God, see the trouble of the afflicted; You consider their grief and take it in hand.

The victims commit themselves to You; You are the helper of the fatherless.

Break the arm of the wicked man; call the evildoer to account for his wickedness that would not otherwise be found out.

The Lord is King for ever and ever; the nations will perish from His land.

You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted; You encourage them, and You listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, so that mere earthly mortals will never again strike terror.



As pastors, evangelists, missionaries and faith-based organizations, we sometimes say we want to "do ministry amongst disadvantaged people." In many cases, this "doing ministry" takes the form of holding crusades in which people are invited up who want to be healed from all manner of diseases that afflict their bodies. While holding crusades or inviting those who need to be healed is not problematic in itself, what we need to ask is how we can tackle the root causes of poverty within our various communities in Africa.

Crusades, conventions and revivals are not only an excellent way of gathering the church, but they also have the potential for equipping the church with the tools to root out one of the greatest culprits Africa is facing. This culprit cripples communities, causes a high level of maternal mortality and infant deaths and exposes people to unsanitary environments that lead to illnesses. This culprit goes by many names such as injustice, poverty and economic disparity.

Martin Luther King Jr. wrote a letter from a jail in Birmingham, Alabama in which he addressed how Christians respond to injustice in our communities. He cautioned...

"The great stumbling block is the moderate Christian who prefers a negative peace, which is the absence of tension, to a positive peace which is the presence of justice. . . In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard many ministers say, 'Those are social issues with which the gospel has no real concern.'"

As emphasized by Martin Luther King Jr's quote, it is our prayer that this guide would call the Church to a revival, a revival that will call us back to our biblical mandate like the prophets of old who called us into action and prayer to eliminate poverty and injustice wherever they abide.

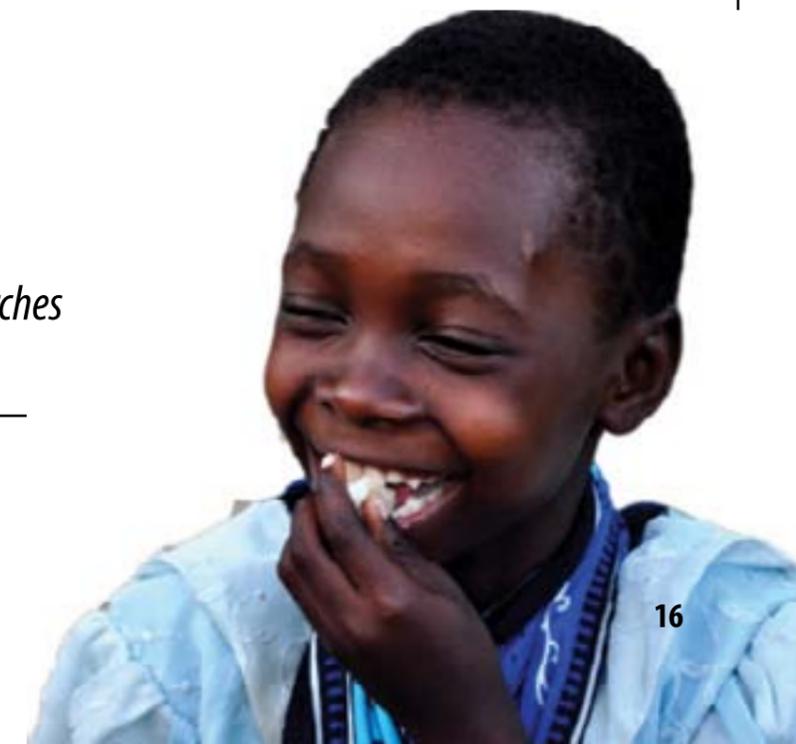
The completion of the six weeks of reading this guide is *not* the conclusion our work. It is our prayer that this guide would continue to stimulate conversation within our congregations, bible studies, prayer groups and communities. Let us not put the issue of poverty and justice on a shelf as if we have completed our work, but let us continue to be aware, to analyse critically and to take action to transform our communities, our nation and our world.

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Just Communities

Organization of African Instituted Churches



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