

Poverty Alleviation in Africa – A Biblical Model

(Shortest Version)

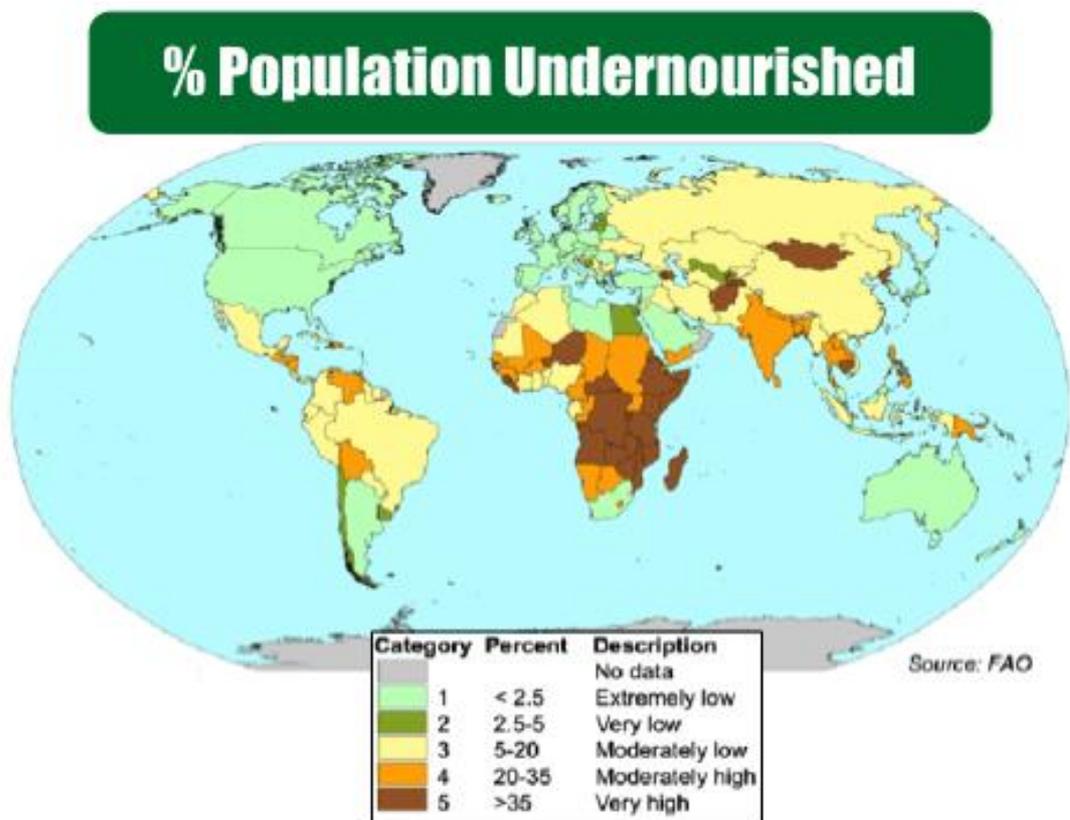
Presented by Brian Oldreive, Founder of Foundations for Farming

Introduction

Africa is the second largest continent and has been blessed with thirty per cent of the world's natural resources, which is more than any other continent, yet it has less than two per cent of the world's gross domestic product. (World Bank 2012 Report - GDP of the world is \$70 trillion with Africa standing at 1.184 trillion, which is 1.7% of the world's GDP). The number of poor people in Africa is increasing in number and depth of poverty. This is happening in spite of the injection of over two trillion dollars of international aid over the last fifty years, and in spite of all the sophisticated systems, methodologies and philosophies of this world.

The World Bank has recently stated that the economic growth in Africa has surpassed that of East Asia, and the economies of the fastest growing African nations are experiencing growth significantly above the global average rates. The rate of return on investment in Africa is currently the highest in the developing world, and many international agencies are gaining increasing interest in investing in emerging African economies.

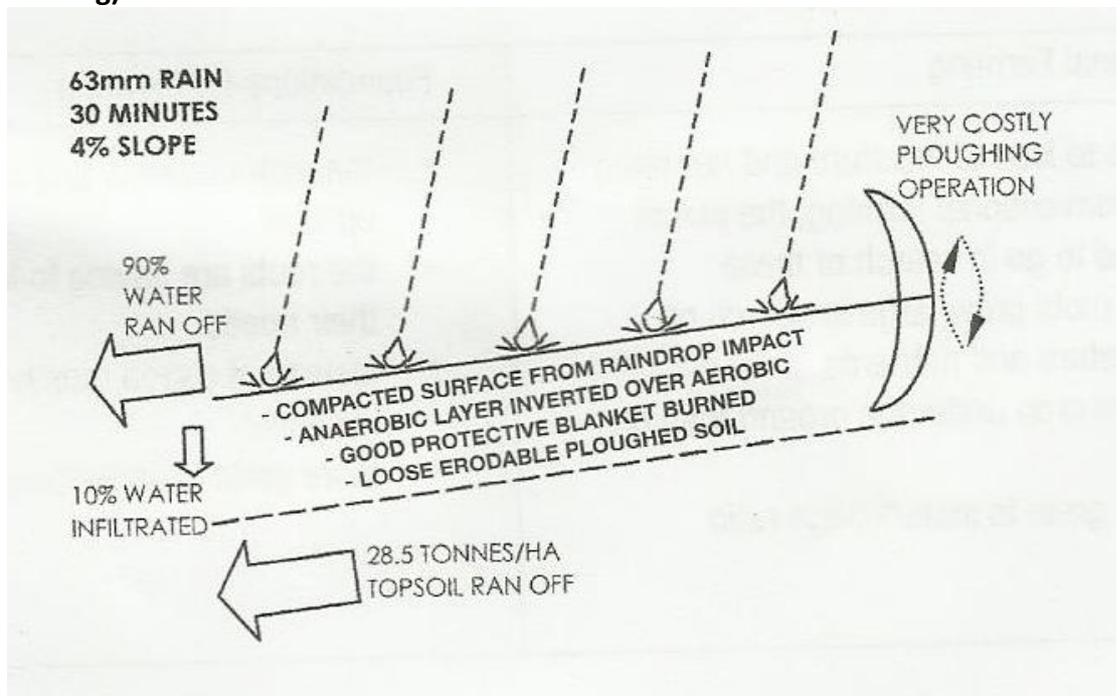
This must mean that this increased portion of wealth is confined to a small and elite percentage of the overall population. A few are becoming richer, while the great majority are becoming poorer and hungrier. We in Foundations for Farming believe that we have been tasked by the Lord to address this injustice.

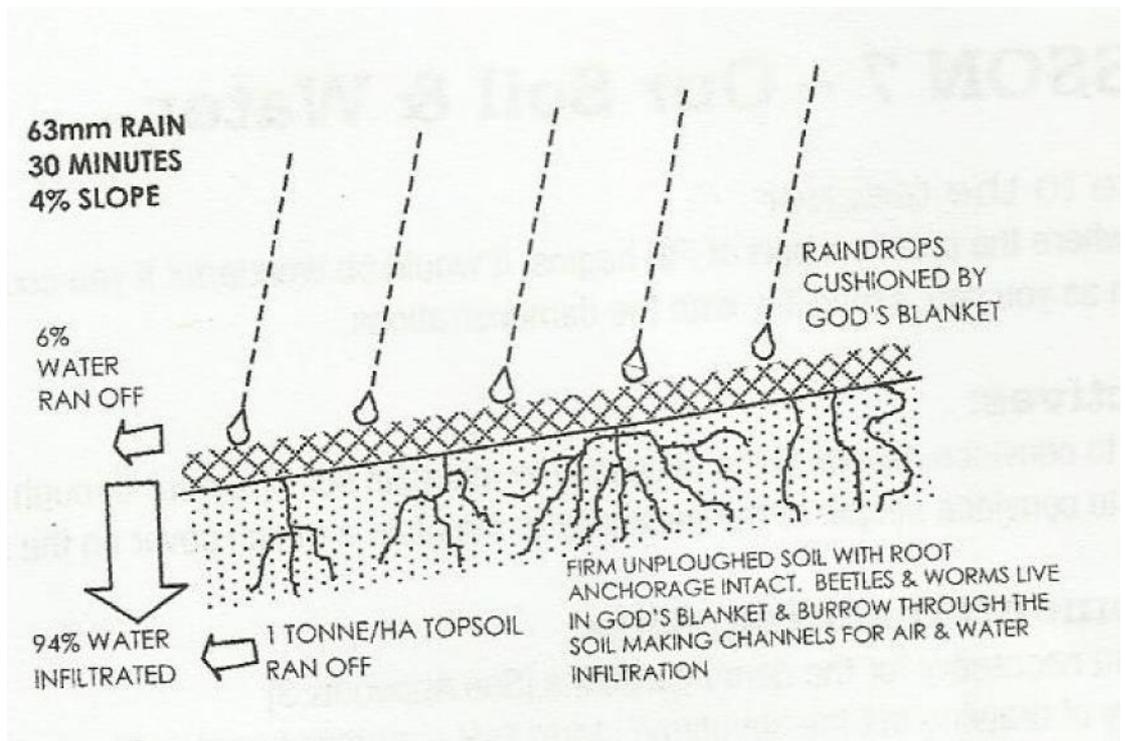


Some Background History of Foundations for Farming

Thirty years ago, in the early 1980s, long before the collapse of our national economy, I became acutely aware of the poverty of our people in Zimbabwe. I had been farming tobacco for the first twenty years of my life after leaving high school. After giving our lives to Christ in 1978, we began growing food crops instead of an addictive poisonous substance. Through a testing and shaping three years, in which we lost our farm, we then farmed for a widow, and it was there that the Lord helped us design and implement a holistic no-till system, which we called Farming God's Way, which later became know as Foundations for Farming. So we were able to pioneer Conservation Agriculture into Africa, and the Lord also enabled us to be the first farmers to wholeheartedly employ black farm managers into what had been a white racist stronghold. We now teach faithfulness and stewardship management into the continent.

Demonstration of Soil & Water Loss (Deep Ploughing vs. Foundations for Farming)



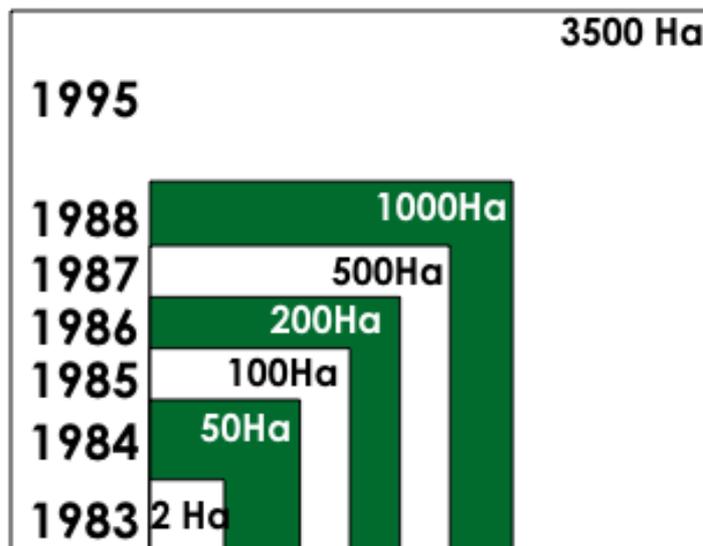


The Experimentation Begins

In the early 1980s we began experimenting with two hectares of Maize into wheat straw, which was so successful that twelve years later it became 3,500ha, which at the time (1995) became the second largest privately owned cropping programme in Africa.

Our Increase

1,300 wheat; 1,000 maize; 1,000 soya; 200 cotton/sorghum/groundnuts



The Outreach to the Poor and Hungry begins

This has been a great adventure in which the Lord has shown us a wonderfully simple technology (just requiring a hoe) that is very appropriate for the small-scale farmers of the developing world. We began trying to share it with our small-scale farming neighbours in the communal area on our boundary, and further afield across the nation, beginning with the cooperatives of the ex-combatants from our liberation bush war in 58 widespread centres.

While we taught and supervised the people at these centres there was a tremendous increase of yields (from 0.5 t/ha to 7 or 8t/ha), but after two or three years of supervision, there was a collapse of performance in every case. By this time our own personal success had caused me to be invited to share in other nations, and I realised that the nature of the indigenous poverty problem was widespread throughout the nations of Africa.

Why does Africa have so many Poor People?

I began to entreat the Lord as to why there is so much poverty in Africa. He first showed me that it was because the indigenous people have been unfaithful with their land, which is the first resource He gives to every nation. This is in direct violation of the parable of the talents (Matt 25: 14 – 30). Our soils are washing away and our continental grain yields has stagnated at about 1 t/ha for sixty years, whilst Europe and Asia have more than doubled, and the US has gone from 4,5 t/ha to over 10t/ha national yield.

Secondly He showed me that in Africa we are net extractors. We do not “sow” adequately into our enterprises, and we tend to “cash strip” from our businesses. This is a very widespread generalisation, and there are exceptions to every rule, but if we are honest, it is true. The root cause is “selfishness”, which I believe is the negative fruit of the fear generated by ancestral worship and witchcraft, which is so widespread in Africa at every level of our society, and even the church.

This means that if the root of our poverty is caused by Unfaithfulness and Selfishness, the answer lies in the Faithfulness and Unselfishness as taught and exemplified by the Lord Jesus. It is the simple, but very intentional focus of Foundations for Farming, to teach the Faithfulness and Unselfishness of Christ in everything that we do.

How do we Reduce Poverty in Africa?

Having asked the Lord “why?” I now asked Him “how?” He answered me in a way I did not expect. He simply said, “Teach Africa to make a profit.” He then showed me that there are only two other ways for people to try and survive, and that is either through the “begging bowl” or secondly through “theft”. But both of these ultimately result in poverty. So profitability is essential! It is the fruit of “Faithfulness.”

How do we Teach Africa to make a Profit?

Again the Lord answered me in a very simple way. At first He showed me that there three things we must do to make a profit.

- Everything we do, must be done “On Time”
- Everything we do, must be done “well” i.e. “At Standard”
- Everything we do, must be done with a minimum of “waste” i.e. “Without Wastage”.

In Africa we are very often late for most things, our standards are the lowest in the world, and we waste so many things, such as, Time, Water, Soil, Labour, Energy, Opportunity, and so the list goes on, and we are losing money at every level, in most indigenous enterprises. We have to ask the Lord to help us change these Values/Ethics/Principles across a continent.

If we apply these three principles of On Time, At Standard and Without Wastage, invariably we will make a profit and succeed in whatever we endeavour to do.

How do we put Theory into Practice in Africa?

As we wrestled with how to put the theory into practice in a meaningful and sustainable way, the Lord gave us a wonderful discipleship model in the story of Nehemiah. It was a constructional engineering miracle that all the rubble was removed and the broken down walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt in only 52 days. In chapter 8: 10, Nehemiah declared, “*For the joy of the Lord is your strength.*” So we have added “With Joy” to the other three principles He gave us. We have seen that this joy in the Lord increases our productivity, and becomes our new work ethic.

So we declare that increased Production and Profitability comes from doing everything:

- **On Time**
- **At Standard**
- **Without Wastage**
- **With Joy**

We Pray that our Nation is Beginning to be Rebuilt on Biblical Principles

We have been reaching out to the poor and hungry for over twenty-five years, and although it began slowly with a very small team, the Lord has now joined together an amazingly gifted and dedicated team, who have helped to share vision and train many trainers and implementers into the fields of Zimbabwe and beyond. This includes thirty nations in Africa and four continents.

There has been such a ground swell of relief and success amongst the poor, that our Government Ministers of Agriculture, Education and Health have asked us to introduce Foundations for Farming into their ministries. The Director of Prisons has asked us to teach into all our national prisons, and even our Chief of Police has asked us to teach our values and principles into all our police stations.

We haven’t had the funding to do all of this, but the intent is there and progress has been made, and the fastest collapsing economy in history is beginning to be rebuilt, in some measure of God’s Way, and on the Foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ. In obedience to the Lord we are establishing Foundations for Farming Training Stations (Models of Excellence) in as many language and culture groups as we can, amongst the poorest people on earth, in as many nations as possible.

Aside from Africa and the rest of the developing world, we have noticed that the unemployed and poor are increasing in every nation. As I travel in the developed world, I see increases in joblessness, drug and alcohol addiction, and more folk breaking down in despair and a loss of self worth. We believe that the Lord has given us some of His solutions and plans to bring Healing and His Hope, Faith and Love (especially for the times to come).

Footnote – I have shared what we are doing in story form, which is the way we learn best in Africa, and which is the best way to reach the heart. (Without vision and knowledge, the people perish. – Proverbs 29: 18, Hosea 4: 6)