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Poverty in Khartoum

Adil Mustafa Ahmad and Ata El-Hassan El-Batthani

SUMMARY: *This paper considers the growth of poverty in Khartoum, including the "new poor" and the historic and contemporary factors that contributed to this growth. It begins by considering the Islamic perspective on poverty.*

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1. Ibn Manzoor (no date), *Lisān-ul-ʿArab* (Arabic), Dar-ul-Maʿārif, Cairo. We have discussed the Arab Islamic perspective of poverty since it applies to the majority of Sudanese people and since it is best developed but it is certain that the Sudan includes minorities with different views and perspectives of poverty.

2. As-Sayyid Sābiq (1985), *Figh-us-Sunna* (Arabic), Part II, Dar-ul-Kitāb Al-ʿArabi, Beirut.

3. Department of Statistics (1994), *Fourth Population Census of the Sudan, 1993; Advance Sample Tabulations: northern states*, Vol.1, Demographic Characteristics, June.

I. INTRODUCTION

FEW ARAB CAPITALS, except those where wars have been waged, can compare with Khartoum in its sad, swift decline over the past dozen or so years. Symptoms of poverty have invaded the city both on an unprecedented scale and in new ways. This poverty affects the individual in two ways: through their own poverty, that is, their lack of adequate means to support themselves and their dependants; and through the poverty linked to the actions of the state, which has stripped them of many essential rights, commodities and services even if they were rich.

II. THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON POVERTY

IT IS SIGNIFICANT that *al-faqr* (Arabic for poverty) exists in the language with two meanings. The first refers literally to removing or destroying a backbone vertebra thus disabling a person or beast (*al-faqeer*); the second means piercing a camel's nose with a metal ring tied to a rope to suppress and tame and hence lead it.⁽¹⁾ The Qur'an mentions two categories of poverty. The first refers to the back-breaking meaning and denotes the poverty which results from disability, old age or illness. The second category of poverty refers to the other meaning and denotes the state of being led by the nose, that is, of dependency and humiliation.⁽²⁾

Islam identifies eight categories of "the poor" whom the state is obliged to support.⁽³⁾ Those who have dealt with the subject and discussed those categories rarely mention that the "slave" category has long ceased to exist or that the *zakat* (tax) collector is, by today's standard, no different from any other civil servant. But what is of interest is the great length to which the Faith goes in identifying the different types of poverty that can act on an individual and in offering the means of alleviating it.

Early Muslim philosophers have pointed out that poverty is as capable of gripping a nation as it is of gripping an individual. Islam, in its quintessence if not in its practised reality, views wealth more in terms of a reduction in personal, worldly needs than of a mere accumulation of means. The measure has always been the "satisfaction" or quality of life of a person perceived simultaneously in material as well as spiritual terms rather than their stage of material wealth measured against some arbitrary standard or "threshold". As with other religions it urges the believer to donate and it prohibits hoarding, whilst simultaneously addressing the poor's sense of pride and discouraging begging unless absolute need arises.

Islam also explicitly warns against unnecessary or inconsequential spending (*israf* or *safah*) or spending which is guided by wrong motives, whether this is by an individual or the state. This can only lead to further imbalance and impoverishment. With these fundamental concepts in mind, the different facets of poverty in Khartoum and the various actors involved can be considered.

III. SYMPTOMS OF POVERTY IN KHARTOUM

THE SQUALOR AND sprawl of squatter areas around Khartoum are the most marked symptoms of urban poverty. These settlements stretch over more than 100 different sites in the three towns that make up Khartoum: Khartoum, Khartoum-North and Umm-Durman. They were estimated in 1990 to shelter more than half the city's population and lack many basic facilities, especially healthy and adequate supplies of water and acceptable sanitation systems. The residents of the squatter areas also face far higher rates of crime and endemic diseases than the city's average and are considered inferior by others in society; the people living in these settlements may believe this also themselves. It is not only material deprivation which makes their lives so difficult but, perhaps more tangibly, social isolation. The oppressive aspect of *al-faqr* in both its forms affects them.

Another symptom of Khartoum's urban poverty is the large and flourishing informal economy. Practically any commodity - newspapers, cigarettes, bread, clothing, postage stamps - can be bought on the streets from peddlers and hawkers, and their convenience for passing motorists takes trade away from conventional shops. This is not to say that the street vendors do not make an important contribution to economic activity and to a lively market - and many also deal in businesses which the formal economy has no interest in - for instance the circulation of second-hand goods. However, a growing number of those involved in these kinds of informal activities are children and youth who, if the need to earn income was not so pressing, would be at school or at work in some form of apprenticeship. Many are forced to work in this way - for instance many older women who seek an income from selling tea on the pavement.

A third symptom, which emerged in the late 1970s, is that of

rationing. The most dramatic price increase was in the cost of petrol, the price of which grew from LS 0.30 per gallon at the end of the 1970s to LS 1,000 per gallon in mid-1994. This greatly increased transport costs, was reflected instantly in the prices of all other commodities and directly affects production costs. Rationing has also come to include bread and sugar although additional quantities of both are officially sold at higher (so called commercial) prices as an intermediate stage between official and black market prices.

Khartoum's once prosperous business centre has undergone a gradual decline and, today, is practically closed in the evenings. It has also lost most other roles such as a centre for social gatherings or entertainment in the evenings. Shopping and other aspects of urban life have shifted to small shops within or close to residential areas rather than the city centre. The same applies to the entertainment sector, as half of the capital's 13 cinemas have closed down and social clubs are less well frequented than they were before petrol shortages. Foodstuff rationing and inflated prices have also hit business, and all this has worked towards further impoverishment of people's quality of life.

The state's poverty is evident in the sub-standard quality and quantity of drinking water, electricity supplies, asphalted roads and health and education services. One example of its mismanagement of resources can be seen in the fact that instead of maintaining an old, leaking water supply network, money is spent on further extending it. Similarly, instead of spending on storm water drainage in a city threatened by rains and floods, money is spent on building and decorating pavements and roundabouts. Proper surface drainage is apparently not seen as a priority despite the impact of inadequate drainage on health in a malaria infested country. Good roads are not seen as something that reduces motor vehicle bills - including spare part and maintenance bills, environmental pollution and vehicle depreciation.

In the state of Khartoum (within which the three-town capital is located), piped water is available to 71 per cent of households: 73 per cent of the urban and 58 per cent of the rural households. Seventeen per cent still obtain their drinking water supply from wells, rivers and canals. Since the early 1980s, the quality of piped water has ceased to meet World Health Organization (WHO) standards. The majority of the state's households (69 per cent) are served by pit latrines while only 3 per cent have public sewerage systems and 15 per cent have no toilet facility of any sort.

Seventy-four per cent of the state's households use charcoal as fuel (77 per cent of urban and 56 per cent of rural households). Only 52 per cent of Khartoum's urban households and 48 per cent of its rural households have access to electricity. Power cuts are frequent, especially in summer, and the fluctuating current is a constant hazard to appliances - an expensive one, too, since the state does not hold itself responsible for damages caused by power cuts and fluctuations.

IV. THE GROWTH IN KHARTOUM'S POPULATION

IN EXAMINING THE causes of urban poverty, one is faced with two central factors. One is the more or less uncontrolled growth of the city; the second is the lack of effective policies aimed specifically at alleviating poverty.

Migration to Khartoum began after independence (1955/56) when laws restricting movement inside the country were abolished and areas previously declared "closed" were opened. However, much of the migration to Khartoum in recent years has been a response to a series of natural and non-natural disasters. The civil war that has been waged in the south for over four decades has destabilized life and sent displaced people northwards. Since the mid-1970s, the country has also been receiving refugees from neighbouring countries, particularly Ethiopians, Eritreans and Chadians. In 1988, rains and floods, the worst since 1946, hit the country and large numbers of people left rural areas and small towns and headed towards Khartoum. Before that, desertification and drought in the west had been responsible for a steady stream of displaced people. In the past couple of years, the volume of refugees and displaced people has diminished perceptibly: Eritreans have headed for their newly created state; Ethiopians, Somalis and Chadians have returned home as conditions in their countries have improved, or they have migrated to the US or other refuges as conditions became progressively worse in the Sudan.

The last population census (1993) enumerated the people in the northern provinces (total 21,085,203) and estimated those in the inaccessible southern ones. The total population of the country was estimated at 24.94 million. This is clearly an underestimate; it reduces the population in the southern states to less than one-sixth of the total population whereas it is more likely to account for one-quarter or more. The Sudan's total population is more likely to be around 27 million and the annual average population growth rate for the country is taken as 2.63 per cent. In the north, the urban population accounts for 34 per cent of the total; the figure for the whole country would be lower as the south is far less urbanized.

Table 1: Population of the Three-Towns Capital, Khartoum

Province	Total population (1993)
Umm-Durman Town	1,208,000
Khartoum Town	936,000
Khartoum North Town	687,000
The Three-Town Capital	2,831,000

SOURCE: Population Census 1993

What is noteworthy is not that one-third of the population in the north live in urban areas but that more than half of these live concentrated in tiny Khartoum State. The population of Khartoum State has increased at a rate of 6.3 per cent annually to 3.41 million, of whom 84 per cent live in the urban areas. The city of Khartoum (i.e. the three-towns capital) has a population of 2.83 million (see Table 1), compared with a population of 800,000 in 1973.

The city of Khartoum has more than 10 per cent of the national population. But the extent to which it concentrates the country's urban population can be seen in the fact that its population is equivalent to the total population of the next 32 largest urban centres. Table 2 shows the population of Khartoum and of the eight largest urban centres after Khartoum. Whilst rapid population growth in Khartoum seems an obvious cause of urban poverty, the more direct cause is in fact the lack of policies to alleviate poverty and the policies in other fields which have further aggravated the situation. In the section below, the major changes that have affected economic structure and urban growth since the colonial era are reviewed.

Table 2: The Population of the Sudan's Nine Largest Urban Centres

Province	1993 Population
Khartoum	2,831,000
Port Sudan	308,616
El Obeid	228,139
Nyala	220,386
Wad Medani	212,501
Al-Gadarif	185,317
Kosti	172,832
Al-Fashir	141,600
Al-Gineina	127,187

SOURCE: Population Census 1993

V. ECONOMIC STRUCTURE AND URBAN GROWTH

a. The Legacy of British Colonialism

IN ECONOMIC TERMS, the British interests in the Sudan were largely to convert the country into a source of raw material production (mainly cotton) and a market for manufactured goods. New administrative systems, educational institutions and social services were established and geared towards maintaining political stability and serving the objectives of the colonial state. As a result two socio-economic sectors emerged: a "modern", largely urban, sector where modern machines and methods of production are used and where social services are provided,

4. Department of Statistics (1994), *Fourth Population Census of the Sudan, 1993; Advance Sample Tabulations: northern states*, Vol.2, Social Characteristics.

5. Ali, Taisier M.A (1989), *The Cultivation of Hunger*, Khartoum University Press, Khartoum.

6. Niblock, T. (1987), *Class and Power in Sudan*, Macmillan, London.

7. See reference 6. The foundations on which Sudan's economy and trade were built, the exchange between agricultural produce (mainly cotton) and manufactured goods, proved to be increasingly damaging to the economy in the post-independence period.

and a traditional, largely rural, sector where simple tools and means of production are used and the economy generally remains oriented towards subsistence production.

During the British colonial period, economic production was oriented towards export but was organized internally along capitalist bases. The Gezira Scheme, the largest irrigated agricultural enterprise, was established in the 1920s to supply British industries with cotton. This was later followed by an expansion of cotton production in other areas, for example in the Nuba Mountains, around the White Nile and the Managil Extension. Mechanized agriculture for food (*dura* - sorghum) production was also encouraged, first to provide food for the troops during the Second World War⁽⁴⁾ and later to feed a growing urban population. Since transport was an integral part of this production process, by linking production areas with export markets, considerable attention was given to the development of railways and communication systems as well as road transport.

At the time of independence in 1955/56, the Sudanese economy had benefited from very little industrialization, with manufacturing contributing less than 1 per cent to Gross Domestic Product, and involving about 0.03 per cent of the working population. The contribution of modern industry to GDP was less than one-third of that made by the traditional craft industry. Moreover, the modern sector accounted for 44 per cent of GDP whilst the traditional sector accounted for 56 per cent and involved around 90 per cent of the population.⁽⁵⁾

Another important feature of the economy was its dependence on foreign trade. In 1955/56, the total of imports and exports was equivalent to 40 per cent of GDP and about 80 per cent of exports consisted of one crop: cotton. Consequently, the economy was rendered vulnerable to fluctuations in world market prices for raw material exports. As a local manufacturing sector was slow to develop, the need for manufactured goods was satisfied by imports. In fact, from the 1950s up to the late 1970s, 75 per cent of exports went to Western Europe and North America and 50 per cent of imports came from the same areas. Thus, the economy of the Sudan was closely bound up with that of the capitalist world as a whole.⁽⁶⁾

However, when the British departed, the Sudanese government was left with a strong revenue base, ensuring a considerable flow of income from state-led economic schemes. Unlike many African governments, who raised 90 per cent of their revenue from taxation, the Sudanese government drew only 64 per cent of its total revenue from that source. Profits from government enterprises made up about 20 per cent of the total, and profits on fiscal monopolies most of the rest.⁽⁷⁾

In terms of social development policy, one may cautiously state that the British interest in bringing about changes in the Sudan was matched equally by their desire not to set in motion radical processes of change and social differentiation. Together with other factors, this desire seemed to have favoured a strategy of controlled change and a relatively equal dispensation of the fruits of change and development amongst contending local groups. Measures were passed to halt the occurrence of widespread

epidemics and famine, and steps were taken to discourage the emergence of landowning and landless classes.

However, the existence of this modern urban sector does not mean that standards of living for the general population were particularly high, nor does it mean that rural people were starving. Salaries and wages for government officials and unskilled and semiskilled workers in government service, manufacturing or commerce were only a little above subsistence level.⁽⁸⁾ Rural producers, on the other hand, cultivated their own crops and received some income from cash crops. With hindsight, life in the 1950s was a lot easier than in the 1990s and the poor then were better off than those of the present day.

In addition, the main cause of the current poverty is four decades of political independence. Successive national governments are responsible for the deterioration of establishments inherited from the British administration in good working order - for instance, the Gezira Scheme, Sudan Railways, the civil service, the educational system and the legal system. While colonial rule did exploit the country's resources in the agricultural sector, it was also an important modernizing force in this and many other sectors. The present inefficiency and widespread corruption, which are central causes of poverty, would have been unthinkable in the mid-1950s.

b. Economic Development and Urban Growth 1956-1975

From the mid-1950s up to the early 1970s, patterns of economic investment and development plans favoured by the coalition of the ruling groups were basically an imitation of the colonial policies that gave priority to the modern (irrigated) sector and urban areas. For example, the Ten-Year Plan 1961-1971, the first comprehensive plan for economic and social development, directed the bulk of public sector investment to infrastructure projects, mainly in the irrigated sub-sector. By 1964, this sub-sector absorbed 75 per cent of all investment designated to the agricultural sector with the rest allocated to large-scale mechanized farming.⁽⁹⁾ The provision of electricity and water to towns and the expansion of existing urban services also received considerable attention.

In the 1960s, the successful completion of railway and highway transport networks, advances made in communications, construction and distribution, the development of private sector trading companies and the expansion of public services had all contributed to the emergence of a number of growing urban centres. Khartoum was much the fastest growing urban centre in the country. The largest trading companies and industries showed a strong tendency to concentrate in greater Khartoum. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, about 80 per cent of all banks, 77 per cent of modern industrial establishments, 85 per cent of commercial companies and 73 per cent of the industrial labour force in the country were concentrated in Khartoum. The urban and economic structures of Khartoum as a centre for manufacturing, trade and services were largely reflected in the social-occupational make-up of its population as indicated by

8. See reference 6.

9. See reference 6.

10. The Republic of the Sudan (1960), *The Ten-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development 1961/62 - 1971/72*, Khartoum.

Table 3. Production workers, the largest occupational group, accounted for almost 40 per cent of the total which, in itself, was an indication of the relatively advanced stage of Khartoum's development in the 1960s and early 1970s, when per capita income was three to five times the national average.⁽¹⁰⁾ During this period, industrial production workers were more typically a middle-income group.

Table 3: Distribution of Khartoum Population (Male and Female) by Occupation in 1975 (%)

Occupational Group	Male	Female	Both
Professional, administrative	9.3	17.4	10.0
Clerical	13.4	26.8	14.5
Trading	12.1	16.5	12.4
Service workers	15.9	17.4	16.0
Production workers	41.7	17.9	39.6
Unskilled (including agriculture)	7.6	4.1	7.3
TOTAL	100.0	100.1	99.8

SOURCE: Keddeman, W. (1976), *Incomes, Employment and Poverty in Khartoum*, Economic and Social Research Council, National Council for Research, Khartoum, Bulletin No.29, March.

11. Keddeman, W. (1976), *Incomes, Employment and Poverty in Khartoum*, Economic and Social Research Council, National Council for Research, Khartoum, Bulletin No.29, March.

However, because of its overall importance and size, the largest number of what could be called "ordinary urban poor" were in this category, particularly amongst the lower ranks of lower-skilled, poorly-paid production workers. Other groups whose incomes were inadequate were found in smaller, informal sector enterprises and in marginal occupations. According to a household survey supported by the International Labour Office in Khartoum in 1974, overall socio-economic inequality was caused unduly by the strong bias of professional, administrative and clerical occupations towards high incomes, where 70 per cent of people with such occupations were in the highest two income groups.⁽¹¹⁾ These groups typically represented the urban middle-classes and their livelihoods were relatively prosperous and secure prior to the mid-1970s when economic crises began gradually to undermine their prosperity. The economic crises also seriously affected their lower ranks, who also became poor, and who can be termed the "new poor".

The main feature of the distribution of the labour force by occupational status in the 1974 Household Survey was the importance of government as an employer. Nearly half of all the working population in Khartoum were directly or indirectly employed by the government. Because of the high share of government employment in total employment, inequality in government wage and pay structure contributed heavily towards overall inequality and consequently to the occurrence of poverty, although the government pay structure in itself was (and perhaps still is) more equal than that of the private sector. How-

12. See reference 11.

ever, it should be noted that, in the 1960s and early 1970s, the government employed a minority at wages below the minimum wage level. The number of people employed by the government below that minimum wage level was small, about 2.3 per cent, and probably consisted of unskilled, casual workers.⁽¹²⁾

c. Economic Imbalances and Crises 1975-1994

By the mid-1970s, the relatively balanced performance of the national economy ended and, for the last 20 years, the economy has experienced a series of imbalances and crises. In line with the interests of the ruling coalitions and on the advice of the World Bank, government economic policies came to support more and more commercial and large-scale mechanized agriculture. Priority was given to large-scale, rain-fed agriculture for imports of machinery and spare parts, and for the provision of fuel at the expense of irrigated cotton schemes, not to mention the already neglected traditional agriculture. The expansion of rain-fed mechanized agriculture was further stimulated by the newly-found market for *dura* (sorghum) in the Middle-East and neighbouring African countries in 1970s and 1980s.

One important implication following from the very large expansion in capitalist mechanized agriculture was the gradual reallocation of resources away from the irrigated cotton sector. There was a significant reallocation of government expenditure away from economic services to defence, security and general administration.

Starved of resources, the export sector (irrigated cotton schemes) declined. Consequently, as the export revenue declined the central government sought to make up for the declining revenue by increasing taxation on foreign trade. Tax revenue grew in relation to non-tax revenue, reaching 81.4 per cent in 1975/76, and this was weighted heavily towards indirect taxes, which made up 71.1 per cent of tax revenue in 1975/76. The implicit rate of taxation on cotton - the principal produce - rose to 26 per cent as compared to 12 per cent for *dura* (sorghum) in 1972/73.⁽¹³⁾ Obviously, the export sector (cotton) was being made, through direct and indirect means, to bear the burden of an expanding state bureaucracy which was treating favourably rain-fed capitalist agriculture.

The poor performance of the agricultural sector, combined with a lack of foreign exchange, an inadequate physical and institutional infrastructure and an acute shortage of financial resources limited the process of economic expansion and eventually contributed to the deterioration of the economy. The severity of Sudan's economic crisis was reflected in the fact that the average growth rate of the export sector was negative - 5.7 per cent - during the period 1970-1980, whilst that of imports was increasing at 3.5 per cent annually. By 1980, the balance of trade stood at the equivalent of over a billion dollars.

With the steady deterioration in the balance of payments and the unfavourable world market situation during 1970s, Sudan's external outstanding debt amounted to US\$6.3 billion by 1982.⁽¹⁴⁾ Faced with an accelerating deterioration in the economy and a

13. See reference 11.

14. O'Brien, J. (1985), "Sowing the seeds of famine: the political economy of food deficits in Sudan", *Review of African Political Economy* No.33, pages 23-31.

political and socio-economic crisis, the ruling elite accepted an IMF "Stabilization Plan" in 1978 involving currency devaluation, a removal of government subsidies on food and other consumption items, a moratorium on new development projects, and other measures.

In the mid-1970s, another phenomenon emerged. Some individuals began to amass riches through speculation, including involvement in a flourishing black market created by shortages in several "strategic" commodities. This was done as visibly and loudly as possible and soon became an attractive model for others. The effect of their activities on the economy - which included general inflation, rising land prices and instability in the hard currency market - was disastrous. The phenomenon has continued unabated with the successive governments seemingly unable to stem it. The people who have become rich through this process have brought about major changes in the traditional social structure - the once respectable and secure civil servant has become a comic character in popular plays who is to be pitied whilst some youths' faith in higher education, hard work and step by step progress has been shaken.

The maldistribution of investment in economic sectors has been a feature of the Sudanese economy since the mid-1970s. In particular, private investment is more concerned with securing quick returns and large profit margins and, with the rapid rate of urban growth in Khartoum, these are generally ensured by investing in trade, land development and services. Thus, between 1970 and 1980, 24 per cent of total private investment went to agriculture and industry and 75.5 per cent to estate, trade and services - for instance the construction of new buildings, hotels, transport and travel agencies.

Thus, the economic crises and imbalances produced prosperity for the few and much lower incomes for the majority. A small minority managed to make very large profits which were either smuggled abroad - one study estimated capital flight in the 1980s as ranging between US\$14 billion to 60 billion - or else invested in unproductive, parasitic activities. This parallel economy flourished from the late 1970s, ironically enough with the introduction of liberalization policies. The scale of its economic activities was such that the ratio of parallel economy to regular GDP grew from 10 per cent in 1977 to 90.3 per cent in 1986.⁽¹⁵⁾

The impact of these developments on income distribution was very serious. In the 1960s, the richest 10 per cent of the population had 38 per cent of the national income and the poorest 40 per cent of the population had 12 per cent. Recently, the gap between the rich and poor has widened and income distribution worsened. In 1991, the share of the richest 10 per cent of the population increased to 59 per cent of the national income and that of the poorest 40 per cent went down to 8 per cent of the national income.⁽¹⁶⁾

Thus, while the number of Sudanese millionaires multiplied, the majority of ordinary Sudanese paid the cost of economic crises and adjustment. Between 1977 and 1987, the cost of living index went up more than 33 times whilst wages and sala-

15. See reference 14.

16. See reference 14.

17. Umbadda, Siddig (1989), *Economic Crisis in the Sudan: impact and response*, Development Studies and Research Centre, Seminar Paper, University of Khartoum, October 1989.

18. See reference 17.

ries were adjusted only 3 times with such adjustments generally being too little, too late. Real wages within the civil service were reported to have declined by an average of 12.5 per cent a year between 1980-1985, and a deputy-under-secretary's salary in July 1986 was worth 8 per cent of its real value in 1975. Workers generally, and the unskilled in particular, were harder hit than civil servants. Even in the private sector, wages for the unskilled fell by at least 30 per cent between 1975 and 1982. When comparing the minimum wage for 1986 with that for 1970, in nominal terms it was five times higher. But in real terms, the minimum wage for 1986 was only 16 per cent of that for 1970.⁽¹⁷⁾

d. A New Category of Urban Poor in Khartoum

It is possible to divide the poor in Khartoum into three categories. The first is what might be termed the usual or chronic urban poor that are found amongst the less educated, semi-skilled workers in the public and private sectors. The second category are the displaced persons, i.e. those compelled by war and famine to leave their places of residence and come to Khartoum. These two categories were estimated, in 1990, to number around 1,577,000 persons living in 38 settlements around Khartoum. The third category are the "new poor", who emerged as a result of economic liberalization and adjustment policies. A leading Sudanese economist divided the urban population into ten income groups and calculated the percentage of urban poor as approximately 60.6 per cent of the total urban population. Taking the urban population in 1978 as 3.1 million, the number of urban poor stood at 1.877 million.⁽¹⁸⁾ Comparing this figure (which was based on the Migration and Labour Survey in 1990) with that of the urban population in 1983 gives an urban population growth rate of 6.2 per cent per annum for the 1980s and an urban population of 6.726 million in 1991. Applying the poverty line formula (LS1,118 per person in 1991) means that 76.7 per cent of the urban population are below the poverty line - and this means 5.2 million people.

Furthermore, if the number of people below the poverty line had simply grown at the annual rate of growth of the urban population, this would have meant 4.1 million urban poor by 1991. The effect of the adjustment programme in creating additional urban poverty might be considered as the difference between these two figures of 4.1 million and 5.2 million. This would mean 1.1 million "new poor", who make up around 20 per cent of all those with below poverty line incomes. It is our contention that this 20 per cent of the new urban poor is largely drawn from people who had previously been considered part of the middle-class of society, mostly drawn from the salaried groups or public sector employees.

VI. CONCLUSION

NO ONE WHO lives in Khartoum would question that urgent and drastic action is needed to combat poverty. This brief pa-

per has sought to describe the scale of poverty and to analyze the nature and roots of the problem. The city of Khartoum more than tripled its population between 1973 and 1993 and practically all this growth was unplanned. Although Khartoum may concentrate a considerable proportion of the country's urban population, this cannot be *the* problem if we compare the situation with that in similar countries. The problem is much more the lack of adequate action to solve the city's deterioration, especially the poverty.

The action required must involve all concerned parties: governmental, non-governmental, private as well as the target communities themselves. It is also important to restore the faith of youth in honest, hard work as the normal route to wealth. But although the information to hand is adequate for planning purposes - the result of three censuses conducted since 1973 (although some of the earlier ones may be incomplete and some of the estimates may be unreliable) - existing institutions dealing with the problem are lacking in funds as well as in the freedom to make decisions. They are in need of an overhaul if their previous efficiency and credibility is to return.

The yardsticks for measuring poverty which are specific to Khartoum are also lacking, as are the policies aimed especially at alleviating poverty. Development plans and strategies mention these only in passing and all but overlook issues of creating employment opportunities. Lip service is paid to topics such as fighting inflation but little has been done that an individual can feel. Finally, a serious campaign against poverty necessitates opening up the issues to public debate, raising people's awareness of them and directing the media to that end - but this is not a totally realistic proposal given the routine role of the media in today's Arab world.