What do we mean when we speak of the gap between the rich and the poor in Malawi today? What factors contribute to this situation? How do we address this problem?

The earth, Mahatma Gandhi once said, provides enough to satisfy every man’s needs, but not every man’s greed. His philosophy echoes the link between social justice and development. In his 1967 statement, *Progress of Peoples*, Pope Paul VI defined development as “the movement from less human conditions to more human conditions” thereby underlying poverty as undesirable human condition.

When we speak of the poor in Malawi, we are precisely referring to inhumane conditions imposed on our brothers and sisters by policies and programmes, priorities and politics. In the context of such kind of poverty, as has been observed elsewhere, we speak not of the “poor” but of the “impoverished.”

Indeed, if we were to talk about of the “rich”, one would be mistaken to think of individuals who have earned their wealth through hard work. Oh, yes, of course, some people are rich because they are hardworking, but this group may account for a very small proportion of the rich in Malawi. The cash gate scandal tells volumes.

This is why we continue to raise the issue of the gap between the rich and the poor. We are conscious of the fact that Malawi has adequate resources to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, clean water, quality education and health services and yet economic and political decisions have been made and continue to be made that prevent a majority to have access to these here in Malawi. Some of the factors contributing to this situation are misplaced priorities and prevailing culture of exploitation.

Malawi has adequate resources to meet basic needs of all but, as has been observed; “we lack committed priorities to put those resources at the disposal of true national development.” Candidly put, our Ministers get hefty salaries besides other privileges while our brothers and sisters lack basic medication. As majority of workers in Malawi continue to suffer in “slavery-like-conditions” existing labor laws remain oblivious.

Government has to protect workers from greedy employers and has to lead by example. The state has to avoid the mistake of doing for individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and hard work. We need to promote human dignity through solidarity that manifests in active structuring of society of mutual and socially just sharing. The outcome for development programme would be a society where great gaps between rich and poor do not exist. Yes, we can!

The CfSC monthly Basic Needs Basket continues to display the disparity between necessary expenditures and available incomes. The cost of the basket in December 2014 in Lilongwe, Zomba, Blantyre, Mzuzu, Karonga and Mangochi was on average K123,015, K111,896; K123,708; K98,866; K95,776 and K107,689 respectively.