

Causes Behind Increasing Poverty Rate

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Defining Poverty and Its Global Human Consequences

Poverty is among the worldwide epidemics that have brought much debate and discussion among nations and leaders. It is a state in which households, individuals, or nations are unable to provide for their basic needs, such as education, food, shelter, and clothing, with dignity. According to research done by the World Bank in 2001, 1.1 billion people were reported to be surviving on less than \$ 1 per day, while 2.7 billion people survived on less than \$ 2 for one day. Over the years, poverty keeps on increasing, especially in developing countries. Some of the causes of poverty include corruption in the leadership of a country, illiteracy, overpopulation, lack of local food control, disability, poor economic development, and epidemic diseases. (Wilmot; Miller and Spoolman)

In the early centuries, poverty came as a result of slavery. This mainly affected African countries during the colonial years. In those times, young and energetic men were captured and taken to work on European farms. This robbed numerous communities of labor in the fields, and therefore, productivity became poor. Food was scarce as mothers and children were deprived of their husbands and hence had no one to provide for them.

Another factor that largely contributed to poverty is conquests among communities. Kings commonly used to take prestige in conquering other communities. In times of war, communities could invest a lot of resources in making weapons and providing food to the soldiers. As the conquests went on, communities exhausted their resources in wars. For those that were defeated, their property and livestock were carried away, leaving them with nothing to survive on. In such instances, it was not easy for those communities to reconstruct themselves to stability.

Corruption, Governance, and the Expansion of Poverty

In the current generation, several other factors have come in that are rapidly increasing the rate of poverty. One of the causes is corruption in leadership. In a study carried out by The African Centre for Economic Growth, it is reported that corruption is the primary cause of poverty in third-world countries. For instance, people in high positions hoard agricultural inputs that are meant to be given to farmers at subsidized prices, and they later sell them at very high prices. Since most farmers are not able to purchase the inputs at high prices, they opt to till their lands without fertilizers. This

eventually leads to low production and, hence, poverty. According to Ochonu, the misappropriation of government funds also leads to poverty. This is because the money meant to build infrastructure and improve transport and communication is embezzled by leaders, leaving citizens in an environment that cannot adequately support economic growth and development. (Haugen and Boutros)

Another leading cause of poverty is overpopulation. Overpopulation occurs typically when the population increases beyond the carrying capacity of the available resources needed for sustenance. This leads to a shortage of food and resources that eventually brings poverty. Overpopulation leads to scarcity of drinking water, poor sanitation, and increased environmental pollution. All these factors work to reduce a nation's poverty. (Galbraith)

Thirdly, poverty comes as a result of epidemic diseases such as HIV/AIDS. When a large proportion of the population is suffering from such diseases as HIV, the country spends a lot of resources on providing medication and sustaining their health. Besides, the sick may not be able to engage in useful labor such as agriculture. This robs families and the national resources enough to sustain the rest of the population, hence leading to poverty. Also, the energy that could have increased productivity is no longer available.

Illiteracy, Economic Exclusion, and Intergenerational Disadvantage

Also illiteracy as well contributes to poverty. Over the past one and a half decades, research has revealed that the absence of a literate workforce in a nation leads to poverty. This is because illiterate people can mismanage funds and resources and, therefore, lower productivity. It is, therefore, rational to think that a literate workforce is more productive than an uneducated people. Literate people can plan for projects, gather resources, implement them, and give accountability more effectively. Besides, wise political and economic decisions in a country are attributed to the literate.

Disabilities and mental illnesses are also factors that contribute to poverty. When a person is disabled, they are not able to work and therefore cannot be able to provide for themselves. The mentally ill persons also cannot be able to reason and engage in labor that can enable them to get income to sustain themselves. This makes them dependent on other people, which can be so burdensome to them. A large number of disabled persons on the streets can attest to this fact. The presence of such disabilities drains families of resources and labor that could have been productive. This, in return, leads to poverty.

Similarly, lack of control over local food has led to poverty in many developing countries. Improper management of food produced by citizens can lead to much wastage and, therefore, an eventual lack of food. This results in importing food from other countries, hence increasing debts to the state and making it poor.

Natural disasters and adverse weather conditions contribute to poverty. Earthquakes and floods destroy large properties and displace large numbers of people. The destruction of homes and property leaves many people homeless and without a source of livelihood. On the other hand, drought leads to poor agricultural production. It results in a lack of drinking water and the death of livestock. This deprives people of their source of income and, hence, leads to poverty. Many people become unable to cater to their basic needs, which in extreme conditions may lead to death. Also, such disasters render most families homeless, leading to an increase in refugees. This usually calls for the aid of the government and humanitarian organizations to provide shelter and food to such families. Many times, the families are unable to reconstruct and recover their earlier way of living.

Welfare Programs, Transparency, and Strategies for Poverty Reduction

With the rise of poverty and its causes, various programs and welfare initiatives have come up to reduce and eventually eliminate poverty. Such programs embrace the idea of eliminating corruption and promoting transparency through democracy, transparent budgeting, and accountability. This will help ensure proper management of funds and resources, which will be efficiently employed in building infrastructure. This will promote trade and, hence, economic growth that will improve people's living standards and free them from poverty. (Curtis and Cosgrove)

Also, nations should provide proper governance and security to their citizens. A clear framework for economic development should be outlined, and the ability of the poor class of individuals to raise their incomes should as well be increased. This will provide a healthy environment in which the citizens will be able to correlate and engage in trade to improve the quality of their lives.

Some of the programs that have come up in the quest to eliminate poverty include Universal vaccination against diseases such as malaria, implementing the green revolution in Africa, targeting decision-makers in developing countries, providing micro-credits to young entrepreneurs, and also giving an ownership stake to the poor. Such programs are run by organizations such as UNICEF and The World Health Organization. If well implemented, the programs can be useful, and they can enable many nations to improve the quality of the lives of their citizens.

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