

Poverty



Poverty is a condition in which a person or community is deprived of, or lacks the essentials for a minimum standard of well-being and life. Since poverty is understood in many senses, these essentials may be material resources such as food, safe drinking water, and shelter, or they may be social resources such as access to information, education, health care, social status, political power, or the opportunity to develop meaningful connections with other people in society.





Poverty naturally causes suffering because it involves the lack of something essential to human life. In the ideal, all people should be able to satisfy their needs and experience lives of health, happiness, and prosperity, not poverty.

Absolute poverty, extreme poverty, or destitution refers to the complete lack of the means necessary to meet basic personal needs such as food, clothing and shelter.

The threshold at which absolute poverty is defined is considered to be about the same, independent of the person's permanent location or era.

On the other hand, relative poverty occurs when a person who lives in a given country does not enjoy a certain minimum level of "living standards" as compared to the rest of the population of that country.

Therefore, the threshold at which relative poverty is defined varies from country to another, or from one society to another.

Providing basic needs can be restricted by constraints on government's ability to deliver services, such as corruption, tax avoidance, debt and by the brain drain of health care and educational professionals.

Strategies of increasing income to make basic needs more affordable typically include welfare, economic freedoms and providing financial services.

Poverty reduction is still a major issue (or a target) for many international organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, United States Agency for International Development, Oxfam, CARE, World Vision International, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Red Cross and others.

World poverty

DEFINING POVERTY **Absolute poverty** is defined according to an absolute minimum standard, often called the 'poverty line'. **Relative poverty** means that you are poor in relation to those around you. **Income poverty** ('less than a dollar a day', for example) means that you are poor if you have less money than the defined poverty line for your country. **Human poverty** takes into account other factors, such as life expectancy, infant **malnutrition**¹, **illiteracy**² and lack of food or clean water.

THE RICH In 1960, the 20% of the world's people who live in the richest countries had 30 times the income of the poorest 20%; now it is 82 times. The world's 225 richest people have a combined wealth of over \$1 million million. Only four per cent of this wealth – \$40 billion – would be enough for basic education and healthcare, adequate food, and safe water and **sanitation**³ for all the world's people.

¹ ill health caused by inadequate food

² inability to read or write

³ systems for taking dirty water and waste from homes to ensure good hygiene

- the 15 richest people have assets that exceed the total **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**⁴ of sub-Saharan Africa.

- the assets of the 84 richest people exceed the GDP of China, which has 1.2 billion inhabitants.

AIDING THE POOR The UN has set the target for overseas aid at 0.7% of a country's **GNP**⁵. Only the Netherlands and Sweden currently meet this target and the US aid budget is the lowest of all. Overall, the average aid provided by richer countries is 0.22% of GNP. If it had stayed at its 1992 level of 0.33%, it would today be \$24 billion more than it is.

The majority of aid is not spent on direct **poverty alleviation**⁶. Some is 'tied' to trade deals, or **debt servicing**⁷. In 1997, debt-service payments from sub-Saharan Africa amounted to 80% of aid. Only 24.3% of overseas aid goes to the poorest countries.

⁴ the total value of all the goods and services produced in a country in one year, excluding income received from abroad

⁵ Gross National Product is GDP plus money earned from abroad by companies based in that country

⁶ reducing the level of poverty

⁷ paying back money owed on loans

Other words and expressions relating to poverty

A number of artists who only became famous after their deaths spent their lifetimes in **penury**. [the state of being extremely poor]

It's a very poor country – over 60% of the population live on (or below) **the breadline**. [having the level of income of an extremely poor person]

The charity's main aim is to improve healthcare in **impoverished** areas of the world. [poor, without much money to live on]

Everywhere in the city you see **destitute** people living in shop doorways or under bridges. [without money, food, home or possessions]

Unfortunately the number of **deprived** children in the world is growing, even in so-called rich countries. [not having the things necessary for a pleasant life – food, home, money]

When we were first married we were **living from hand to mouth**, so it's nice to be able to spend a bit more now. [having just enough money to live without suffering]

Ever since I lost my job, **money has been tight**. [there has not been much money]



45.1 Do these statements reflect the points made in the article in A? Mark each one *True* or *False*. If the statement is false, correct it.

- 1 Income poverty takes health factors into account as well as money.
- 2 If the 225 richest people in the world each gave up 4% of their wealth, there would be no poverty problems in the world.
- 3 15 people each have wealth that is worth more than the GDP of sub-Saharan Africa.
- 4 The US gives 0.7% of its GNP to overseas aid.
- 5 The proportion of GNP given as overseas aid is increasing.
- 6 More than three quarters of aid is used to pay back previous loans from richer countries.
- 7 Just over a quarter of overseas aid actually goes to the poorest countries.

45.4 Choose the best word to complete each of these sentences.

- 1 A person who sleeps in a cardboard box on the street and begs for money can best be described as impoverished/destitute.
- 2 Without my husband's income, we were very much living from hand to mouth/foot.
- 3 When we were children, money was always small/tight.
- 4 Even children with rich parents can be deprived/destitute in terms of love and affection.
- 5 An increasing number of people live below the penury/breadline.

45.2 Choose one of the words in the box to complete each of the sentences below.

absolute
relative

alleviation
sanitation

Domestic
servicing

malnutrition
National

- 1 The figure for a country's Gross Product will be larger than that for its Gross Product.
- 2 In countries where food is scarce, is inevitably a major problem.
- 3 Using overseas aid for debt does not directly help any people who are suffering through poverty.
- 4 The amount of money earned by someone suffering from poverty will be greater in a rich area than in a poor area, whereas poverty does not take account of a person's immediate environment.
- 5 The Child Poverty Action Group does all it can for the of poverty among children in the United Kingdom.
- 6 Temporary refugee camps usually have rather poor facilities.

45.3 Match the two halves of the collocations. They are all used in the text in A.

1 poverty

2 life

3 overseas

4 minimum

5 debt

6 infant

7 trade

8 income

poverty

deal

servicing

aid

standard

expectancy

line

malnutrition

Answers:

- 45.1**
- 1 *False* **Human** poverty takes health factors into account as well as money.
 - 2 *True* This is implied by the figures rather than stated directly in the text.
 - 3 *False* 15 people **have a combined wealth** that is worth more than the GDP of sub-Saharan Africa.
 - 4 *False* The US gives **less than** 0.7% of its GNP to overseas aid.
 - 5 *False* The proportion of GNP given as overseas aid is **decreasing**.
 - 6 *True*
 - 7 *False* Just **less than** a quarter of overseas aid actually goes to the poorest countries.

- 45.2**
- | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| 1 National; Domestic | 3 servicing | 5 alleviation |
| 2 malnutrition | 4 relative; absolute | 6 sanitation |

- 45.3**
- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 poverty line | 5 debt servicing |
| 2 life expectancy | 6 infant malnutrition |
| 3 overseas aid | 7 trade deal |
| 4 minimum standard | 8 income poverty |

The above are the collocations used in the text in A and are the strongest collocations. However some other collocations are also possible, for example: lifeline (one word), overseas deal, minimum aid.

- 45.4**
- | | | | | |
|-------------|---------|---------|------------|-------------|
| 1 destitute | 2 mouth | 3 tight | 4 deprived | 5 breadline |
|-------------|---------|---------|------------|-------------|

Favelas



In Brazil most of the poorest live in urban favelas .

Favela is a slum or shanty town located within or on the outskirts of the country's large cities, especially Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Some of the best-known favelas are those that cling to steep hillsides in Rio de Janeiro. Favela housing generally begins with makeshift structures fashioned from wood scraps and daub. Over time more-durable materials such as brick, cinder blocks, and sheet metal are incorporated.

Shanty towns

Shanty towns are slums on the outskirts of many cities – especially in third world countries. Normally there are not many shanty towns in more economically developed countries. Often of low cost, with houses badly built with plywood, corrugated metal, sheets of plastic, cardboard or any available material. Often irregular structures good enough to keep the rain away or to protect from the summer sun. Pets and animals are often left to roam for food and water.

Lack of clean water, sanitation and toilets often make people, especially children, more exposed to illnesses such as hepatitis and cholera.



<http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Poverty>

<http://www.globalissues.org/issue/2/causes-of-poverty>