



## THE RISE OF POVERTY

Marian Baltazar  
Class of 1980 University of the Philippines Manila  
AB Political Science

Poverty rates around the world are very alarming. One cannot disclose the fact that poverty is becoming to be a world problem or shall we say dilemma. In fact, the increasing rate of hunger, malnutrition and illiteracy cannot be ignored, so much more with poverty. This only means that we cannot take the problem on this aspect lightly. Statistics show the increasing rate of this quagmire. Can we find then a panacea to this very serious illness of the society? Then, there should be real solutions to come up with to be able to address the root causes of poverty. A better understanding of what are the challenges faced by the people who are living in extreme poverty should be taken into consideration.

Addressing poverty do not only mean providing jobs and income-generating opportunities to the poor but it is also about reducing their expenses on basic needs like food, health and education. The importance of increasing the income of the poor covers only one aspect of poverty. It would be naïve to believe that the poor might be able get out of this destitute status. Anything which promotes growth will surely lead to removing poverty. Poverty should not be just defined in income earning possibility but it should also be an access to essential service like health, electrification, clean drinking water and sanitation, thus, improving also access to education.

We should remember that health is a key element in human welfare. All of these are very important part in the efforts of removing poverty and the government is involved in all of them. The government should have series of programs organized with the aim of pressuring local authorities and non-government organizations to take action in eradicating extreme hunger and poverty. In last year's UN session, world leaders laid down their achievements and goals in their efforts to decrease world poverty.

Poverty has to do with more than only a lack of income; it also deals with the question of rights. More often than not, it is described as the worst violation of human rights. The respect for human rights should let us realize and recognize that everyone has the right to the things which are essential for a dignified existence in the likes of food, water, basic health care, education and housing. Those rights (based on universal values) give people who live in poverty an instrument to restore the disturbed balance of power that keeps them poor. Take a good look at these poor people and you will clearly see deprivation; listen to the voices of the poor and it will tell you about insecurity. Poverty boils down to powerlessness-the poor have no control of their lives; they only have limited choices, making them voiceless.

Questions for discussion:

1. How can poverty be reduced?
2. How can you redefine poverty?
3. How could we address poverty?
4. Is it possible to eliminate poverty in a poor country?
5. Why is poverty a human rights crisis?