



POVERTY-“VOICES OF THE POOR”

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

Where could one really see “poverty per se”? We often marvel at those developing countries which are slowly making them as one of the “super powers of the world”. My guess is as good as yours because the most severe poverty can actually be seen in them. Poverty can be seen as collective condition of poor people or of poor groups and to avoid stigma these countries are called developing countries. Not only that, it plagued the societies of every nation too. It can also be linked to suicide. Thus, poverty when measured can be relative or absolute. Relative property is a poverty measure based on a poor standard of living or a low income relative to the rest of society. It is very similar to measurements of social inequality. On the other hand, absolute poverty is a condition of life which is so characterized by malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, squalid surroundings, high infant mortality and low life expectancy. This form of poverty affects human life on all levels of existence.

But then sometimes we can measure poverty as extreme and moderate. Extreme poverty meaning the extremely poor people struggle to find the means to eat three meals a day. They live in isolated and rural villages. The 95% of them live in homes with dirt floors and roofs that fail to keep out the rain and other elements and their homes lack basic sanitary latrines. They can never afford the most basic necessities to ensure survival. Moderate poverty are households which can just barely meet their basic needs, meaning these people must forego many of the things, like education and health care that many of us take for granted.

Come to think of it we can actually consider these things as the “Voices of the Poor”. There are some range of factors which poor people consider elements of poverty. Most important are those necessary for material well-being especially food. Yet, the condition of poverty is linked to questions of scarcity and distribution of resources and power. Whatever the case maybe, poverty naturally causes suffering because it primarily involves the lack of something essential to human life.

It’s so sad to think that all over the world, the voices of these poor people are not really being heard. Can we blame them for being poor? I just hope that the government of every nation would do something about it. The cost of poverty is tantamount to life itself. Let’s all join our efforts in a call for programs which will alleviate the standard of living of the poor. Each and everyone in their own special way can do something about it and that I firmly believe. Let’s hear the “Voices of the Poor”

Questions for discussions:

1. How can we really define poverty?
2. Are we aware of its true existence?
3. Can we arrest extreme property?
4. How can we contribute to these poor people experiencing poverty?
5. Can poverty be experienced by the rich too?