

# 1 NO POVERTY



## END POVERTY IN ALL ITS FORMS EVERYWHERE

**The first Sustainable Development Goal calls for an end to poverty in all its forms by the year 2030.**

Achieving this goal means seeing a reduction in the number of people living on less than \$1.25 US per day. The more people earn, the more they can spend on their basic needs. One of the ways the UN hopes to do this is by implementing social protection systems at the national level to support the poor and vulnerable. That is no easy task, especially given that not everyone experiences poverty the same way.

## TARGETS

- End extreme poverty for everyone
- Implement social protection programs for the poor and vulnerable
- Ensure that everyone has equal rights to economic resources, such as control over land, property, inheritance, natural resources and financial services
- Help improve vulnerable people's resilience in the face of environmental and climate-related shocks and disasters
- Improve the political, economic, and social support for poverty-reduction strategies

“ The earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed. ”

**Mahatma Gandhi**  
Indian activist



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Learners will understand the concepts of relative and absolute poverty, while critically reflecting on their underlying cultural assumptions and practices.
- 2 Learners will become aware of the local, national and international distribution of poverty and wealth, as well as a collection of poverty reduction strategies.
- 3 Learners will be able to collaborate with others to empower individuals and communities to affect change, raise awareness and encourage dialogue and solutions regarding poverty.
- 4 Learners will be able to evaluate, participate and propose solutions to systemic problems related to poverty.

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

### Media

How does the media present poverty? Locally?  
Nationally? Internationally?

### Consumerism

Do our consumer habits impact the lives of others?  
If yes, how?

### Environment

How do environmental concerns like climate change  
impact poverty?

### Poverty, wealth and power

How does access to power and wealth relate  
to poverty?

### Indigenous peoples

In what ways do Indigenous people experience  
poverty uniquely?

### Oppression and genocide

How is poverty a form of oppression?

### Health and biotechnology

What are the impacts of poverty on a person's health?

### Gender politics

How does gender impact a person's experience  
with poverty?

### Social justice and human rights

What can we do to support people in poverty?  
Locally? Nationally? Internationally?

### Peace and conflict

What can be done to resolve poverty at different  
system levels?



# THE BIG QUESTIONS

## 1 Where did it begin?

- It's hard to say where poverty began. Often, poverty exists as a cycle of events that impact a person's socio-economic situation. For the individual, it could come from an unfortunate incident, or they could be born into poverty. A drought could have impacted a farmer's crops and reduced their income, or someone could face discrimination in getting a job because of their **gender**, ability, religion, sexual orientation or literacy level.
- On an international level, the legacy of **war**, **political instability**, **national debt**, **discrimination**, vulnerability to national disasters and **colonialism** can impact the ability for governments to provide for their own citizens, resulting in social, economic and political inequalities that still impact the people living in these countries today.<sup>1</sup>

## 2 Why does this issue matter?

- **Poverty exists in many forms**

Poverty can be understood in a variety of forms, measures, and degrees, such as these key terms: **absolute poverty** and **relative poverty**. Absolute poverty represents an internationally set standard of measuring poverty in relation to a person's ability to meet their basic human needs. Relative poverty is defined and measured by income inequalities of a particular social context, meaning that people are in poverty if they fall below prevailing standards in their region.

- **Poverty is a cycle**

Poverty is more than not having enough money, it also includes the lack of **basic services** such as education, **food security**, social discrimination or lack of participation in decision-making. It takes money, resources and power to be able to engage with your community and support yourself.

As described by the UN, poverty includes a lack of choices and opportunities. Without access to basic resources and services, poverty impacts people's basic survival and participation in society.

When you are poor, you don't have enough money to feed or clothe your family, go to school or have land to grow your own food or earn a living. Living in poverty also means you are susceptible to violence and live in a fragile environment, or might live without access to clean water or **sanitation**.

- **Poverty is measurable**

One way we can measure poverty is through the **poverty line**, or the minimum daily income that will allow you to meet your basic needs. A majority of people living on less than \$1.90 a day live in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. They account for about 70 per cent of the global total of extremely poor people.<sup>2</sup> Calculating a **poverty rate** measures the number of people living below this daily income level.



## 3 Who and what are affected?

- **The rich and poor**

Both locally and internationally, there is a widening gap between rich and poor; however, this is not a simple question of extreme wealth in developed countries and extreme poverty in developing countries. Using data, European researcher Hans Rosling founded the Gap Minder Project<sup>3</sup> that shows how wealth and poverty have been shifting over time. Take a peek and see how people in communities around the world live on their daily income.

- **Children**

On a local level, many issues of poverty are impacting Manitobans. From homelessness to child poverty, to the over-representation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system, poverty has many sources and impacts in our community. In particular, Manitoba has the highest child-poverty rate in the country, with nearly 29 per cent of children living in poverty in the province.<sup>4</sup>

Within Canada, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that in 2016, 60 per cent of children living on reserves were living in poverty.<sup>5</sup> Barriers such as underfunded schools and **child welfare services** impact the ability for children to realize their potential. This is part of the problem of the **cycle of poverty**—the set of factors or events that make it difficult for an individual or group of people to get out of poverty without intervention.

- **Women**

Internationally, women are more vulnerable to the effects of **climate change** because they constitute the majority of the world's poor. Because two-thirds of the working women in developing countries make a living from agricultural resources for their income, they are more vulnerable when it comes to poverty when those resources are negatively impacted by climate change.<sup>6</sup>

“The most direct cause of women's misfortune is poverty; demanding their freedom means above all demanding reform in the economy of society which will eradicate poverty and give everyone an education, a minimum standard of living and the right to work.”

**Zoé Gatti de Gamond**  
Belgian educator and feminist



## 4 What is being done?

- Tackling huge systemic issues like poverty takes a lot of coordinated effort from a number of **stakeholders**, or people who have an interest in seeing this issue resolved. From large corporations to smaller local organizations, everyone is capable of tackling poverty issues.
- Advocating for effective **poverty reduction** strategies is a great way governments, organizations and decision-makers can help on a number of different levels. From income supports to child care programs, poverty-reduction programs enable people in poverty to create wealth for themselves and end their cycle of poverty.
- In order to make a difference in ending poverty as we know it, we need programs at the local, national and international levels. Some strategies are introduced to empower particular groups of people, like women, while others attempt to address particular elements of poverty, like debt or food insecurity.
- Another strategy for poverty reduction is using a **universal basic income** as a means of supporting citizens or residents of a region or country to receive an amount of money either from a government or public institution. The idea was explored in the town of Dauphin in Manitoba in 1970 to see the impact of giving people money instead of targeted aid. The results found that, while not cheap, the program was able to stabilize poverty, reduce hospitalization rates and saw more teenagers staying in school.<sup>2</sup>

“Don't let complexity stop you. Be activists. Take on the big inequities. It will be one of the great experiences of your lives.”

**Bill Gates**  
Microsoft founder



## CONNECTION TO THE OTHER GOALS



The more the global population grows, the more burden is placed on the environment, making poverty a concern for our planet as well. From harmful practices which lead to **deforestation**, air and water pollution, soil erosion and increased consumption, impoverished communities can contribute to **environmental degradation** in many ways.<sup>8</sup> Education is needed to learn about proper and harmless methods to dispose waste and develop sustainable agricultural systems. Programs like re-forestation or improved waste management systems can help restore the impact of humanity and poverty on our environment.<sup>8</sup>



As a social problem, poverty and income inequality have been a reason for protests and social revolutions. As an example, the Occupy Wall Street movement wanted to change the way money, wealth and income are distributed in the United States. The movement's focus is to change the fact that there is a very big difference between how much money and wealth rich and poor people have. A group of protesters came together in New York City on September 17, 2011 and began gathering in Zuccotti Park in downtown Manhattan near Wall Street. The objective of the protest was to bring attention and political action to economic inequalities worldwide.



Poverty continues to impact women more than men. Women are over-represented in the ranks of the poor and under-represented among upper income earners. According to the Centre for Social Justice, in Canada the poverty rate is 20 per cent for women in general; 37 per cent for women of colour; and 43 per cent for Indigenous women.<sup>9</sup> While issues of poverty affect populations in general, the above statistics show that they affect people within these groups uniquely.<sup>10</sup>



## Consequences of inaction

- From an economic perspective, poverty is expensive. It is not just about giving money to people to support them, but orchestrating an entire network of support. From healthcare and justice to education and social welfare, it costs of the Province of Ontario (in collaboration with the federal government) between \$10.4 billion and \$13.1 billion a year to reduce poverty in the province.<sup>11</sup>
- One of the biggest challenges to alleviating poverty is to tackle all of its various root causes. While it might be easy to assume that taking care of someone's income or personal finances might solve the problem, the causes of poverty can often be social or health-based, or experienced as a result of war or climate change.
- Problems with physical or mental health, experiences of violence, exploitation and **marginalization** contribute to putting people in positions of poverty. Without taking the time to understand what the social and emotional causes of poverty are, we might be putting our efforts into a short-term solution of a long-term problem.

## REFLECTION AND ACTION QUESTIONS

- 1 How do you feel about the issue now that you know more about it?
- 2 How might this issue have been prevented? What could have been done differently?
- 3 How has this problem changed over time? Where do you see it going in the future?
- 4 What questions do you still have?

“When individuals join in a cooperative venture, the power generated far exceeds what they could have accomplished acting individually.”

**R. Buckminster Fuller**  
American author  
and inventor



## RESOURCES

### How to take action

- Go to [DoSomething.org](https://dosomething.org) to select an issue you or your students want to take action on and generate ideas based on options you choose. For example, select “poverty” as your cause with a few hours as your time frame, and it will generate ideas like [building kits of basic supplies to donate to a homeless shelter](#).
- [Sign the ONE campaign](#) to tell G20 leaders that girls count and poverty is sexist [here](#).
- Help support a local effort to reduce poverty: foodbanks, school food programs, homeless shelters, local charities or the United Way. Find out what’s happening in your community and get on board!
- Take action through groups students may already be a part of, such as Girl Guides of Canada. They have developed a [national service project](#) that challenges girls to take action in their own communities, and they also have [various project ideas here](#).

### Educational resources

- The World’s Largest Lesson page for Goal 1 has downloadable comics, posters and lesson plans [here](#). You can also download a lesson for 11-14 year olds called [The World is Not Equal. Is That Fair?](#) This lesson highlights different types of inequality and helps students explore the impact inequality has on the wider society and economy.
- The BC Teacher’s Federation pulled together a document with [lessons and resources on poverty](#).
- Explore Oxfam International’s [learning resources](#) for Global Poverty Day.
- [Global Poverty Requires Local Solutions](#) (ages 11-14) is a lesson plan that introduces poverty, its definition and potential solutions with a focus on the value of education. The lesson uses the author’s location of Hyderabad, India as its focal point.
- A series of [lesson plans on poverty](#), available through the Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation, focus on the United Nation’s **Millennium Development Goals**, but are still relevant under the new Sustainable Development Goals.
- [Scrambling for Resources](#) is a lesson plan using pennies (or any small coin or item) to teach students about income distribution and wealth in the world, and how it is often unequal.





## CASE STUDIES

### 1 The Marquis Project

An example of local and international poverty reduction initiatives in action is the Marquis Project in Tanzania.<sup>12</sup> The goal of this project is to assist **child-headed households** and marginalized young women and girls through facilitating their participation in the local **market economy**. The program helps people learn about how to become entrepreneurs and increase their income to support themselves and their family. The project acts as a catalyst to increase local capacity through a combination of **micro-enterprise, agro-production** and vocational training, mentorship and **micro-credit** development.

### 2 Poverty reduction in Canada

In Canada, poverty reduction strategies are addressed at the provincial level. Social programs such as welfare, **old age security, employment insurance, minimum wage laws** and **child credits** are designed to help people who are economically vulnerable lessen the chances of them falling into poverty. The funding for these programs comes from the Canadian income tax system. Without the Canadian tax system, poverty rates in 2013 could have been 23 per cent instead of the 12 per cent that year.<sup>13</sup> Cuts to spending on social welfare programs make it difficult for people living in poverty to support themselves and their families on limited income.

### 3 The Grameen Bank

As an example of someone working on poverty reduction, Professor Muhammad Yunus<sup>14</sup> established the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh in 1983, fueled by the belief that credit is a fundamental human right. His objective was to help poor people escape from poverty by providing loans on terms suitable to them and by teaching them a few sound financial principles so they could help themselves. Replicas of the Grameen Bank model operate in more than 100 countries worldwide. By acknowledging the rights of all people to economic empowerment, Professor Yunus was making a difference in the lives of the poor.

### 4 Presbyterian World Service & Development Organization

The Presbyterian World Service & Development Organization is working with vulnerable youth, women and men to provide them with skills to help them build sustainable livelihoods for themselves and their families in Malawi. Self-help groups provide education, vocational training and savings or financial management skills, following the idea of "each one, teach one."



## 5 Canadian Multicultural Disability Centre

Using the current Zimbabwean cattle ownership trust scheme, the Canadian Multicultural Disability Centre is helping disability-headed households participate in dairy farming. Dairy farming has a higher potential for immediate income generation compared to traditional farming, since farmers do not need to wait until the harvest season to take their produce to market.

## 6 HOPE International Development Agency

HOPE International Development Agency is helping women in Southern India improve their livelihoods by enhancing the resources of local institutions, including self-help groups and community managed resource centres. In collaboration with a local **non-governmental organization** (NGO), the MYRADA project uses a self-help group approach and forms member-based groups to focus on socioeconomic empowerment for two vulnerable groups: Dalit and women.

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### End notes

<sup>1</sup> <https://borgenproject.org/what-causes-global-poverty/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.gapminder.org/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://cwp-csp.ca/2015/12/we-can-do-it-report-provides-anti-poverty-roadmap/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/institute-says-60-percent-fn-children-on-reserve-live-in-poverty-1.3585105>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate change/downloads/Women and Climate Change Factsheet.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate%20change/downloads/Women%20and%20Climate%20Change%20Factsheet.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/06/20/why-dont-we-have-universal-basic-income>

<sup>8</sup> <https://borgenproject.org/how-poverty-impacts-the-environment/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.socialjustice.org/index.php?page=gender-inequality>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.socialjustice.org/index.php?page=gender-inequality>

<sup>11</sup> <https://feedontario.ca/what-happens-when-the-safety-net-fails/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.marquisproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Marquis-TSAEE-June-2014-1.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/Details/society.aspx>

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/2006/yunus-bio.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2006/yunus-bio.html)