

This article is about a social understanding of poverty. Read the text and answer the questions below. You are advised to read the questions carefully, giving answers that are of direct relevance and written in English.

A Social Perspective on Poverty

Poverty entails more than the lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods. Its manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion, as well as the lack of participation in decision-making. Various social groups bear a disproportionate burden of poverty.

A social perspective on development requires addressing poverty in all its dimensions. It promotes a people-centred approach to poverty eradication, advocating the empowerment of people living in poverty through their full participation in all aspects of political, economic and social life, especially in the design and implementation of policies that affect the poorest and most vulnerable groups of society. An integrated strategy towards the eradication of poverty necessitates implementing policies geared to more equitable distribution of wealth and income and social protection.

Equality and Equity

Equality can be understood as parity in the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms, and equality of opportunities with regards to education and work and the fulfilment of potential. Equity relates to a degree of equality in the living conditions of people, especially in terms of income and wealth, that society considers desirable.

A social perspective on development emphasizes the view that inequality impairs growth and development, including efforts to eradicate poverty, and that equity itself is instrumental for economic growth and development. It aims at providing a better understanding of the effects of economic and

social policies on equity in societies and promotes ways of advancing policies contributing to the reduction of inequalities. Policies for both inequality and poverty reduction are mutually reinforcing.

Unemployment and underemployment lie at the core of poverty. For the poor, labour is often the only asset they can use to improve their well-being. Hence, the creation of productive employment opportunities is essential for reducing poverty and for sustainable economic and social development.

Given the importance of employment for poverty reduction, job-creation should occupy a central place in national poverty reduction strategies. Many employment strategies are often related to agricultural and rural development and include using labour-intensive agricultural technologies; developing small and medium-size enterprises, and promoting micro projects in rural areas.

Such strategies, however, often address the quantity of employment while the qualitative dimensions, such as equity, security, dignity and freedom are often absent or minimal. In general, national poverty reduction strategies do not comment on employment programmes, social protection or rights at work. Neither do they offer in-depth analysis of the effects of policies on poverty reduction. There should be a focus on creating better and more productive jobs. Social economy institutions and organizations play an important role in promoting livelihoods and job creation in the fight against poverty. Social economy enterprises offer an important source of employment in the face of the global unemployment and underemployment problems.

Cooperatives

Currently, it is estimated that the global cooperative movement directly provides productive self-employment for several hundred million workers-owners of

production and services cooperatives, as well as the non-member employees and other cooperative enterprises. Agricultural cooperatives create employment in areas such as food production, marketing, credit, insurance and transportation. Cooperatives also provide more quality job opportunities for youth, women, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups. Cooperatives contribute to poverty reduction by typically placing more emphasis on job security for employee-members and employees' family members, paying competitive wages, promoting additional income through profit-sharing, distribution of dividends and other benefits, and supporting community facilities such as health clinics and schools that do private sector businesses.

Adapted from a text by UNDESA © 2008 UNDESA
<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/social/poverty>

Questão A

This question tests your understanding of the text and your ability to identify and paraphrase the relevant pieces of information.

You **must** answer in **full sentences**, using your **own words**.

- The text suggests that the creation of jobs might reduce poverty. What other measures could alleviate poverty, according to the text? (1,2,3)

Resposta

According to the text, besides the creation of jobs, it would be important to expand access to education and other basic services. It is also important that strategies for poverty reduction be reinforced by inequality reduction policies. It is vital that any policy adopted should have as its focus the creation of jobs, and that these policies promote a fundamental and more balanced distribution of wealth.

Beyond creating more employment, any strategy aiming that must consider the qualitative aspect of such employment. Jobs ought to be higher in quality and more productive. Finally, governments should support the creation and development of cooperatives, since it is known they are very effective in helping to relieve poverty.

Questão B

This question tests your ability to express yourself in a manner that is clear, precise and relevant.

The text links working with the concept of "well-being". It states that: *"For the poor, labour is often the only asset they can use to improve their well-being"*.

- In your opinion, what constitutes well-being? How, if at all, do you think it can be achieved by the individual? State your own view, giving an informed and thoughtful argument. You should write about 100 words. (4,5,6)

Resposta

Well-being might mean having enough money to meet the basic needs of food, housing, health and education. It's naive, however, to reduce the well-being of an individual to simply being healthy and having money. Nevertheless, these form the fundamental basis without which happiness cannot be achieved.

Labor is most certainly one of the means to improve well-being. For an individual, having a proper and well-paid job is the first step towards self-realization.

The role of every government is to promote the creation of quality jobs so that each citizen is able to contribute to society as whole, and at the same time fulfill his aspirations.

Questão C

This question tests your ability to construct a balanced, considered and fluent argument, in the form of a short composition.

The quotes below were taken from reports on poverty and human rights. Read both quotes and answer the question below.

"Poverty results from negligence and discrimination..., and from an unwillingness to change the status quo."

© 2007 Amnesty International
http://www.amnesty.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc_18243.pdf

“A society characterized by extreme inequalities and the lack of opportunities can become a breeding ground for violence and crime.”

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<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/rwss/media%2005/report/The%20Inequality%20Predicament.pdf>

- To what extent should inequalities within a society be reduced? How, and by whom, should such action be taken? Try to present a balanced and logical discussion, structuring your answer well and justifying all your arguments. You should write about 120 words. (7, 8, 9)

Resposta

“All men are created equal.” This is how most Americans regard themselves – as a classless society where freedom is the supreme value that pervades every aspect of its fabric. Not a popular

view these days, especially as we face an unprecedented financial crisis no one seems to fully understand. America’s example, however, should not be discarded as sheer propaganda, for we all have reaped the benefits of Uncle Sam’s prosperity.

America is actually proud to be an unequal society whose hard work is rewarded (“You reap what you sow”). One does not encounter all the unemployment benefits extolled by European social democrats. Yet hardly anyone is found without a paid job. Even those who retire keep working, for this plays a fundamental role in their self-esteem.

In Europe, on the other hand, government programs provide a dignified existence only to natives – immigrants, who often do the tough job, are usually excluded.

So should the government take action against poverty? Certainly, but how? By providing top-quality public schools where students can really learn and be trained for a globalized economy. That’s called dignity. Anything else is just doublespeak – the very path to poverty.