



# Poverty

## Sustainable Development Goal 1

Issues for Discourse with Youth

Bahá'í Discourse - Poverty

# Sustainable Development Goal 1

1. End **poverty** in all its forms everywhere

**1** NO  
POVERTY



# Poverty

Poverty can be described as the absence of those ethical, social and material resources needed to develop the moral, intellectual and social capacities of individuals, communities and institutions.... the goal at hand is not only to remove the ills of poverty but to engage the masses of humanity in the construction of a just global order.

*(Bahá'í International Community, [Eradicating Poverty: Moving Forward As One](#), 2008)*

# UN on Poverty

The 2030 Agenda acknowledges that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

# UN on Poverty

The first Sustainable Development Goal aims to 'End poverty in all its forms everywhere'. Its seven associated targets aim, among others, to eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty, and implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.

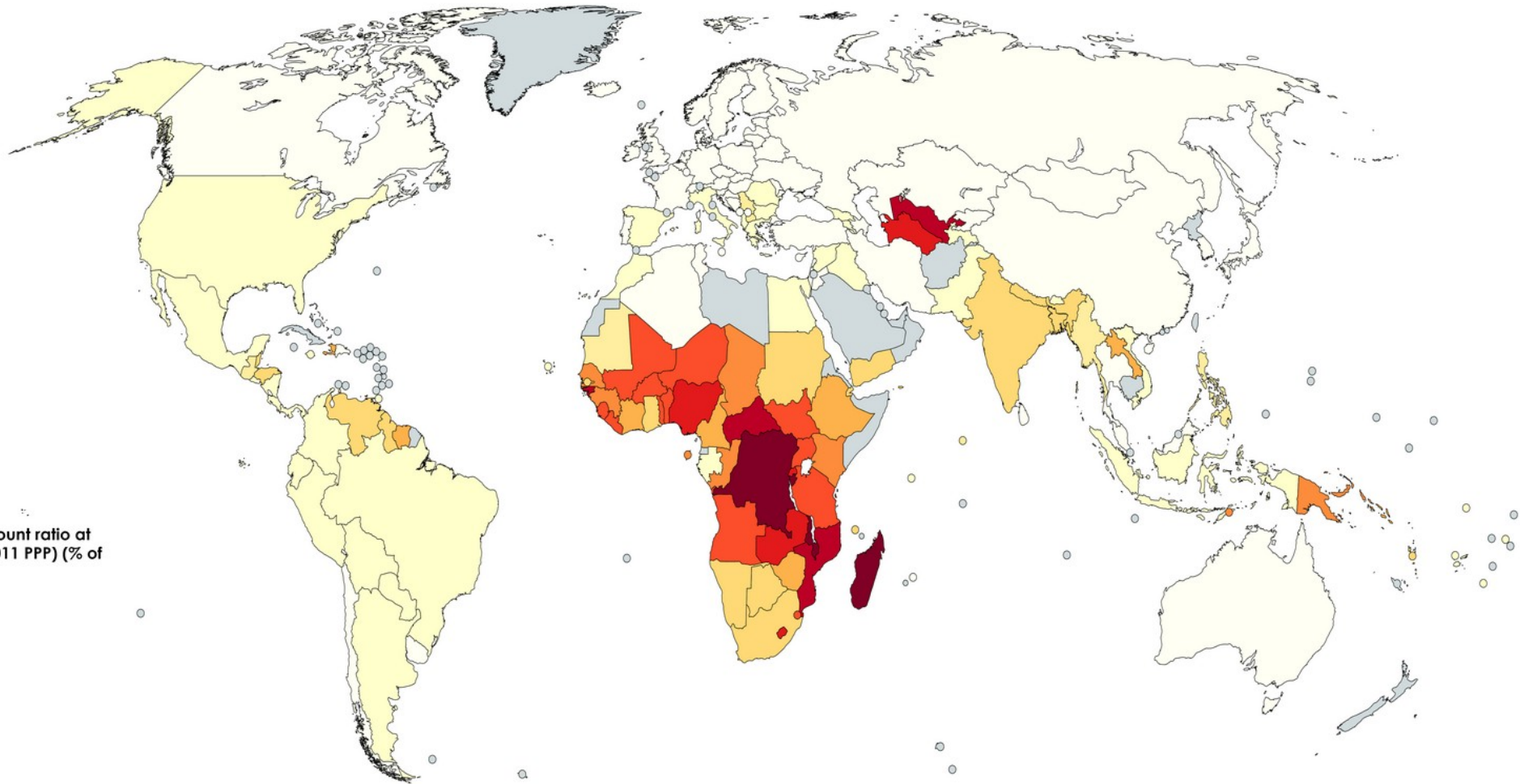


Poverty

# Most People are in Poverty

Statistically, most of the world's population lives in poverty: 85% of people live on less than \$30 per day, two-thirds live on less than \$10 per day, and 10% live on less than \$1.90 per day.

Poverty headcount ratio at \$1.90 a day (2011 PPP) (% of population)





# Status of Poverty – World Bank

The recent crises have pushed the world further off track from the global goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030. Given current trends, 574 million people—nearly 7 percent of the world’s population—will still be in extreme poverty in 2030. And the challenge is made harder by the fact that this is concentrated in parts of the world where it will be hardest to eradicate: in Sub-Saharan Africa, in conflict-affected areas, and in rural areas.

# World Bank on Poverty

Eradicating poverty requires tackling its many dimensions. Countries cannot adequately address poverty without also improving people's well-being in a comprehensive way, including through more equitable access to health, education, and basic infrastructure and services, including digital.

# Poverty and Climate Change

We cannot reduce poverty and inequality without also addressing intertwined global challenges, including slow economic growth, fragility and conflict, and climate change.

Climate change is hindering poverty reduction and is a major threat going forward. The lives and livelihoods of poor people are the most vulnerable to climate-related risks.

# UNDP on Poverty

UNDP projected that, during 2020-2023, 165 million people fell into poverty (with incomes of under \$3.65 a day).

The cost of inaction for dozens of economies currently facing high debt service levels is devastating. Debt service payments are displacing investments in important areas such as health, education and social protection and hindering efforts to mitigate income, job and poverty shocks.



# Failure to Eliminate Poverty

- Why have we failed to eliminate poverty?
- It is not a priority for the dominant economic system
- This has deep roots in colonialism that built the Western economies
- Today, corporations are the new instruments of colonial exploitation
- This is perpetuated in the ways greed is incorporated into the institutions of the economy and the financial system

# Origin of Economic Values

“As Britain became an imperial power, and then the world’s leading power of the 19th century, British philosophy changed to justify Britain’s emerging empire. British philosophers championed a powerful state (Thomas Hobbes’ Leviathan), the protection of private wealth over redistribution (John Locke’s right to “life, liberty, and property”), markets over government (Adam Smith’s “Invisible Hand”), and the futility of aiding the poor (Malthus’ law of population).”

(Jeffrey D. Sachs, 26 June 2023, The New World Economy,  
<https://www.jeffsachs.org/newspaper-articles/us-politics-and-the-paris-finance-summit>)

# Origin of Economic Values

“When humanitarian crises arose in the British empire, such as the Irish famine in the 1840s and the famines in India later in the century, Britain rejected providing food aid and left millions of its subjects to starve, even though food supplies were available to save them. The inaction was in line with a laissez-faire philosophy that viewed poverty as inevitable and help for the poor as morally unnecessary and practically futile.”

(Jeffrey D. Sachs, 26 June 2023, The New World Economy,  
<https://www.jeffsachs.org/newspaper-articles/us-politics-and-the-paris-finance-summit>)



# Values to address poverty

Issues of food, nutrition, health and shelter are central to the challenge of providing an adequate standard of living for all members of the human family. These issues cannot, however, be tackled solely as technical or economic problems. Eliminating hunger and malnutrition; establishing food security; providing adequate shelter; and achieving health for all will require a shift in values, a commitment to equity, and a corresponding reorientation of policies, goals and programs.

*(Bahá'í International Community, [Valuing Spirituality in Development: Initial Considerations Regarding the Creation of Spiritually Based Indicators for Development](#). A concept paper written for the World Faiths and Development Dialogue, Lambeth Palace, London, 18-19 February 1998)*

# A new universal attitude

The inordinate disparity between rich and poor, a source of acute suffering, keeps the world in a state of instability, virtually on the brink of war. Few societies have dealt effectively with this situation. The solution calls for the combined application of spiritual, moral and practical approaches.

# A new universal attitude

A fresh look at the problem is required, entailing consultation with experts from a wide spectrum of disciplines, devoid of economic and ideological polemics, and involving the people directly affected in the decisions that must urgently be made.

# A new universal attitude

It is an issue that is bound up not only with the necessity for eliminating extremes of wealth and poverty but also with those spiritual verities the understanding of which can produce a new universal attitude.

Fostering such an attitude is itself a major part of the solution.



Poverty

# Social and Economic Justice

Social justice will be attained only when every member of society enjoys a relative degree of material prosperity and gives due regard to the acquisition of spiritual qualities. The solution, then, to prevailing economic difficulties is to be sought as much in the application of spiritual principles as in the implementation of scientific methods and approaches.

# Poverty and Wealth

The poor need to exert themselves and strive to earn the means of livelihood, while they who are possessed of riches must have the utmost regard for the poor. Wealth is praiseworthy if it is acquired by an individual's own efforts in commerce, agriculture, art and industry, and if it be expended for philanthropic purposes.

(based on Universal House of Justice, To the Baha'is of the World, 1 March 2017)

# Eliminating Poverty

The extremes of wealth and poverty in the world are becoming ever more untenable. As inequity persists, so the established order is seen to be unsure of itself, and its values are being questioned. Whatever the tribulations that a conflicted world must confront in the future, [every community must take up] its responsibility to find ways of addressing the root causes of the poverty in its surroundings, ... [achieving] the higher purpose of economic activity.

(Universal House of Justice, To the Baha'is of the World, 1 March 2017)



# Poverty and Wealth

*...you must assist the poor as much as possible, even by sacrifice of yourself. No deed of man is greater before God than helping the poor....*

*(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), 77)*

# Poverty and Wealth

*Each one of you must have great consideration for the poor and render them assistance. Organize in an effort to help them and prevent increase of poverty. The greatest means for prevention is that whereby the laws of the community will be so framed and enacted that it will not be possible for a few to be millionaires and many destitute.*

*(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), 77)*

# Poverty and Wealth

*One of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings is the adjustment of means of livelihood in human society. Under this adjustment there can be no extremes in human conditions as regards wealth and sustenance.*

*(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), 77)*

# Poverty and Wealth

*For the community needs financier, farmer, merchant and laborer just as an army must be composed of commander, officers and privates. All cannot be commanders; all cannot be officers or privates. Each in his station in the social fabric must be competent—each in his function according to ability but with justness of opportunity for all.*

*(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), 77)*

# Voluntary Sharing

*...the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh advocate voluntary sharing.... Man reacheth perfection through good deeds, voluntarily performed, not through good deeds the doing of which was forced upon him. And sharing is a personally chosen righteous act: that is, the rich should extend assistance to the poor, they should expend their substance for the poor, but of their own free will, and not because the poor have gained this end by force.*

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1982), p. 115)

# Voluntary Sharing

*For the harvest of force is turmoil and the ruin of the social order. On the other hand voluntary sharing, the freely-chosen expending of one's substance, leadeth to society's comfort and peace. It lighteth up the world; it bestoweth honour upon humankind.*

# Poverty and Wealth

*As the rich man enjoys his life surrounded by ease and luxuries, so the poor man must, likewise, have a home and be provided with sustenance and comforts commensurate with his needs. This readjustment of the social economy is of the greatest importance inasmuch as it ensures the stability of the world of humanity; and until it is effected, happiness and prosperity are impossible.*

# Guaranteed minimum income

*All must be producers. Each person in the community whose income is equal to his individual producing capacity shall be exempt from taxation. But if his income is greater than his needs he must pay a tax until an adjustment is effected.... if his necessities exceed his production he shall receive an amount sufficient to equalize or adjust. Therefore **taxation will be proportionate to capacity and production** and there will be no poor in the community.*

*(Abdu'l-Bahá (1912), [Foundations of World Unity](#), p. 37)*



# Poverty and Wealth

*When the laws [Bahá'u'lláh] has instituted are carried out, there will be no millionaires possible in the community and likewise no extremely poor.*

*(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), 77)*

# Eliminate the causes of poverty

The greatest gift that we can give to the poor and the down-trodden is to aid to build up the divine institutions inaugurated in this day by Bahá'u'lláh as these institutions, and this World Order when established, will eliminate the causes of poverty and the injustices which afflict the poor.

(From a letter dated 11 March 1942, written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer,  
Compilation on Social and Economic Development)