



WHAT IS POVERTY?

According to the World Bank, a United Nations (UN)¹ designated agency, poverty is “the inability to attain basic standards of living”².

Poverty is far from an abstract term insofar as the fight against it requires parameters to monitor advances in development. The internationally-accepted definition consists in establishing a “poverty line”; anyone living below that line is considered to be in poverty.

In other words, it refers to people who live below the level that a specific society considers to be the “minimum” to lead dignified lives.

According to CORTINA, “**The researcher or politician selects a set of assets considered to be basic, their price is assessed and a calculation is made of which people do not reach this level**”³; these people are considered to be suffering from poverty.

¹ More information about the UN and its designated agencies:

<http://www.un.org/es/sections/about-un/funds-programmes-specialized-agencies-and-others/>

² *What Is Poverty and Why Measure It?*

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/PGLP/Resources/PMch1.pdf>

³ CORTINA, Adela and PEREIRA, Gustavo. *Pobreza y libertad. Erradicar la pobreza desde el enfoque de Amartya Sen*. Tecnos: Madrid 2009, p. 18



To quantify the extent of the poverty, a distinction is usually made between “extreme poverty” and “relative poverty”. Therefore, it is considered that **an individual is living in a situation of complete or extreme poverty if he/she lives below a minimum income threshold**. In 2015, the World Bank updated the international poverty line (IPL) to 1.90 US dollars a day⁴. In turn, **relative poverty is when an individual lives below an income threshold established by his/her country**, which is usually established at half the average income of the citizens of that country.

In either case, when speaking of poverty we refer to a lack of means, resources and income. The reality is, when we speak of poverty we are referring to a lack of opportunities, autonomy, and a **lack of freedom to “develop the life projects that an individual could reasonably expect”**⁵.

POVERTY: A MAJOR HURDLE TO DEVELOPMENT

Development as a human right – formalised legally in the 1986 “Right to Development Declaration” in Ruling 41/128 of the UN General Assembly – is, according to VASAK, a “synthesis

⁴ For more information about the updating of the poverty line: <http://www.bancomundial.org/es/topic/poverty/brief/global-poverty-line-faq>

⁵ CORTINA, Adela and PEREIRA, Gustabo. Op. cit, p. 19

right”, i.e. **a right that integrates the entire set of human rights and whose ultimate target is to promote and apply these them**⁶.

However, the exercise of this “synthesis right”, that is the enjoyment all of our human rights, will not be possible if we do not address the greatest global obstacle of all: poverty in all its forms.

When the **8 Millennium Development Goals** were adopted in 2000, **the elimination of extreme poverty was set as the number one target (MDG 1) to be achieved before 2015**. This priority was not chosen lightly, as it constitutes, without a shadow of a doubt, the main challenge in achieving a sustainable, shared prosperity around the world. Now, **with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), also headed by the elimination of poverty in all its forms (SDG 1), we have a new opportunity to achieve this challenge before 2030**.



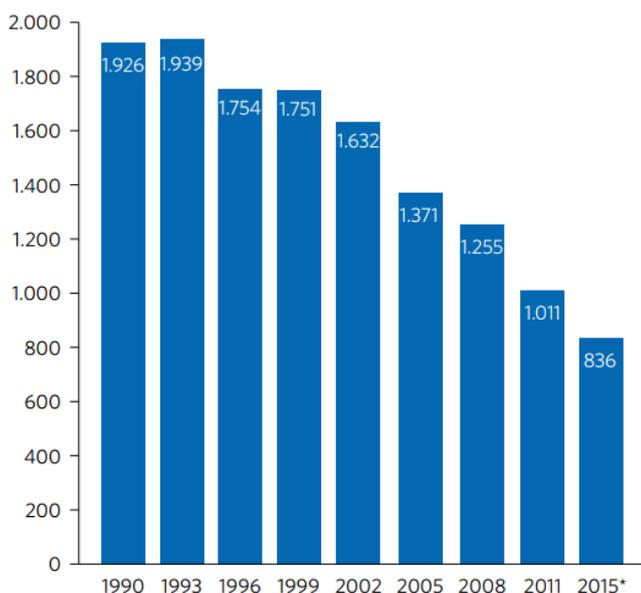
⁶ VASAK, Karel. *Les différentes catégories des Droits de l'homme*, en *Les dimensions universelles des Droits de l'homme*, UNESCO-Bruylant, Bruxelles, 1990, p.297



FROM MDG 1 TO SDG 1: HAVE WE MADE PROGRESS?

When we measure MDG-related advances, the initial reference data is taken from 1990. According to the latest MDG report, **the number of people living below the extreme poverty line – 1900 million in 1990 – would have reduced by half upon closing the MDG in 2015⁷.**

Chart I: Number of people in the world living on less than 1.25 US dollars a day, 1990-2015 (in millions). Source: Millennium Development Goals Report 2015.



Just as the UN revealed in the first SDG report, if the economic growth rates observed over recent years prevail for the next 15 years, **the world rate of extreme poverty will probably fall to 4% by 2030, supposing that the growth benefits all**

⁷ The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015 [http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20\(July%201\).pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20(July%201).pdf)

income groups equally⁸. This is a major supposition, given that despite advances, growth is absolutely unequal.

Whilst in East and Southeast Asia the percentage of the population living in extreme poverty fell from 35% to 3% between 1999 and 2013, in Sub-Saharan Africa, 42% of the population were still living in extreme poverty conditions in 2013 (the last year for which the UN provides official data). In fact, **Sub-Saharan Africa alone is home to approximately half the entire global population of people living in a situation of extreme poverty.⁹**

In parallel to the 2030 Agenda, and to achieve equal growth in 2015, Africa adopted its own complementary plan: Agenda 2063¹⁰. In this plan, the African Union defines seven aspirations that upon completion, would finally transform Africa into a free, self-sufficient and sustainable continent. Free, above all free.

⁸ The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016 <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/The%20Sustainable%20Development%20Goals%20Report%202016.pdf>

⁹ The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017 <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2017/TheSustainableDevelopmentGoalsReport2017.pdf>

¹⁰ Agenda 2063 <http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/agenda2063.pdf>



WHO CAN DO WHAT?

ON AN INTERNATIONAL LEVEL



Jeffrey Sachs, economist and author, among other works, of “The End of Poverty”, calculated that in order to put an end to extreme poverty around the world in 20 years, the total cost per year would reach around 175,000 million US dollars. This represents less than 1% of the combined incomes of the richest countries in the world.

ON A NATIONAL LEVEL



Challenge 1.3 of the SDG1 calls for governments to “implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.”¹¹.

ON A LOCAL LEVEL



Find out about the work carried out by the Poverty Zero platform in Navarre: **Interview with Laura Irurzun**, active participant in Poverty Zero Navarre in representation of the NGOs in Navarre.

¹¹ Consult the 5 SDG 1 challenges: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/es/poverty/#13ea19c2b798f482d>

AND WHAT CAN YOU DO?



“Education does not change the world. Education changes people. People change the world.” Paulo Freire.

Infant and Primary pupils

Suggestion for pupils to work with their families: when they arrive home they can look in the fridge and ask which daily menu they could have for 1.90 US dollars. In the classroom you could share thoughts and, adapting content to each level of education, speak about the causes and consequences of extreme poverty in the world. Where is Sub-Saharan Africa? Show them on the map.

Secondary and Baccalaureate students

Students can create a list of daily expenses: percentage of electricity and water, home Internet connection, mobile phone costs, daily food allowance, transport. What would they each do with 1.90 US dollars a day? What other “poverty lines” are there? Why is poverty the Article 1 obstacle in the Development Rights Declaration?

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