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**EFFECTS OF POVERTY IN OUR AFRICAN SOCIETY**

Poverty is much more than just statistics about economies, hunger and homelessness. Poverty is a state of life all of humanity. Poverty is commonly defined by economic standards, based on income levels and access to basic human necessities. Poverty is daily hunger, child malnutrition, a lack of access to clean water, shelter, health care, little or no opportunity to go to school, constant fear for the future and increased risk of exploitation and abuse. According to Mahatma Gandhi, “Poverty is the worst form of violence.”

Poverty often ranges from extreme to moderate levels. The World Bank defines extreme poverty as living on less than $1.90 a day which puts 10% of the world’s population below the global poverty line. The geographic breakdown of regions with the highest levels of poverty ranging from worst to best include: Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, Pacific East Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, North Africa and Middle East Europe and Central Asia. From this, it can be deduced that Africa is the poorest continent in the world by a long shot. 27 of the world’s poorest countries are in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1 in 3 Africans live below the global poverty line and 70% of the world’s poorest people live in Africa. In 1990, 278 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa lived in poverty. By 2015, that number had grown to 413 million and now approaching 440 million. As a result of this extreme levels of poverty in Africa, the effects are immeasurable.

Due to poverty in Africa, hunger in Africa is also on the rise. 256 million Africans are hungry, an increase of 44 million since 2014. As a result of constant rise in population and very little resources to feed this population, it leads to hunger especially in low income earning homes. Poverty also leads to inadequate or no infrastructure. The infrastructure that most of the world takes for granted is missing or limited in Africa. 589 Sub-Saharan Africans live without electricity and cook by burning whatever wood they can find. Water and sanitation cost these poor African countries more than the total economic aid they receive. They are not also able to build well-functioning health centres.

As a result of hunger or lack of good food, lack of clean drinking water, inadequate or no shelter and other important infrastructure in Africa, there is an epidemic of diseases and disabilities among Africans especially the children. An ever increasing number of children are growing up stunted as a result of malnutrition. Diseases like HIV/AIDS are leaving a lot of children orphaned. Because of poor living conditions, Africans are exposed to the dangerous sicknesses such as typhoid, cholera, AIDS and most commonly malaria which kills approximately 3,000 Africans each day. All of these lead to high infant death rates in Africa. Although, there may be health cares in some parts of Africa, not all of them are properly equipped to treat sick patients and since some Africans are poor, they are not able to afford the bill so they are left sick or in some cases, left to die.

As stated earlier, poverty is little or no opportunity to go to school. Consequently, there is an increase in the level of illiteracy in our society. Although literacy seems to be improving in Africa, it is still not encouraging. According to UNESCO, in Sub-Saharan Africa, more than 1 in 3 adults cannot read, 182 million adults are unable to read and write, 48 million youths are illiterate, 22% of the primary aged are not in school that makes about 30 million primary aged children who are not in school. It is well known that illiteracy leads to a lot of problems in our society like unemployment, human trafficking and so on. When individuals are not properly educated or not educated at all, they lack the skills or requirements to get a job. Human traffickers also deceive them into following them with the mind set of going to greener pastures only to be sold to people or used for slavery or something as brutal as organ harvesting. Poverty leads to an increase in the abuse of human beings and violation of human rights since these poor individuals in our African society are not heard because of their social and economic status and have no one to speak up for them. Girls, no matter how young they may be face sexual assaults daily and they cannot say or do anything about because of their status in the society.

There is an increase in crime rate and social vices in our society, this is because poverty drives individuals to do whatever they can to get money. Numbeo (2015) ranked six African countries as among the 20 countries with the highest crime rate. These countries include: South Sudan, South Africa, Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya and Libya. Some of these social vices include: prostitution, theft, kidnapping, armed robbery, money rituals, human trafficking, drug trafficking and many other examples. These seem to be quick ways to get money so people engage in these activities because they see it as their only means of livelihood. They see it as the quickest way out of the misery that poverty has put them in. in some cases, they blame the society for their state and also the government so in a way, it is done to get back at them.

However, poverty affects Africa as a whole because wars and conflicts in most regions of Sub-Saharan Africa are often as a result of poverty. From religious conflicts and riots in Nigeria, Ivory Coast and Liberia, and from the Arab genocide against native Sudanese to the Congo. Some of the causes of poverty also tend to be the effects of poverty such as embezzlement among leaders since they are aware of the impoverished state of the economy, some of them may become greedy and embezzle funds meant for the country. In times of pandemic like the COVID-19 pandemic our world is currently facing, more recoveries could be found in non-African countries than in African countries because they have efficient and enough resources to take care of the patients. Countries in Africa have to spend more to purchase some of these resources and end up borrowing money from countries or the IMF which does not help our matters as it puts countries in huge debts to other countries. Poverty is one of the major challenges Africa is faced with that has made some Africans feel some sense of shame in their continent. As a result of crime rates due to poverty, some non-Africans feel fear coming to Africa.

Every society, every country in Africa faces unique challenges when it comes to poverty. And although the causes may vary, the root causes are the same. With immeasurable effects for both the individuals and the society at large, poverty is a complex societal issue that has to be approached with diplomacy and compassion. We can all contribute in our little ways in offering help to the poor and making sure they are treated properly. We can simply donate old clothes, sponsor some of their education or engage in community service by imparting them with knowledge. We should remember that no act of kindness is too small.