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Topic : POVERTY AND ITS CAUSES

**POVERTY AND ITS CAUSES**

We can define poverty as the condition where the basic needs of a family, like food, shelter, clothing, and education are not fulfilled. It can lead to other problems like poor literacy, unemployment, malnutrition, etc.

A poor person is not able to get education due to lack of money and therefore remains unemployed. An unemployed person is not able to buy enough & nutritious food for his family and their health decline. A weak person lacks the energy required for the job. A jobless person remains poor only. Thus we can say that poverty is the root cause of other problems.

**How is poverty measured?**

For measuring poverty United nations have devised two measures of poverty – Absolute & relative poverty. Absolute poverty is used to measure poverty in developing countries like India. Relative poverty is used to measure poverty in developed countries like the USA. In absolute poverty, a line based on the minimum level of income has been created & is called a poverty line. If per day income of a family is below this level, then it is poor or below the poverty line. If per day income of a family is above this level, then it is non-poor or above the poverty line. In India, the new poverty line is Rs 32 in rural areas and Rs 47 in urban areas.

**What are the causes of poverty?**

According to the Noble prize winner South African leader, Nelson Mandela – “Poverty is not natural, it is manmade”. The above statement is true as the causes of poverty are generally man-made. There are various causes of poverty but the most important is population. Rising population is putting the burden on the resources & budget of countries. Governments are finding difficult to provide food, shelter & employment to the rising population.

The other causes are- lack of education, war, natural disaster, lack of employment, lack of infrastructure, political instability, etc. For instance- lack of employment opportunities makes a person jobless & he is not able to earn enough to fulfill the basic necessities of his family & becomes poor. Lack of education compels a person for less paying jobs & it makes him poorer. Lack of infrastructure means there are no industries, banks, etc. in a country resulting in lack of employment opportunities. Natural disasters like flood, earthquake also contribute to poverty.

In some countries, especially African countries like Somalia, a long period of civil war has made poverty widespread. This is because all the resources & money is being spent in war instead of public welfare. Countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, etc. are prone to natural disasters like cyclone, etc. These disasters occur every year causing poverty to rise.

Poverty affects the life of a poor family. A poor person is not able to take proper food & nutrition &his capacity to work reduces. Reduced capacity to work further reduces his income, making him poorer. Children from poor family never get proper schooling & proper nutrition. They have to work to support their family & this destroys their childhood. Some of them may also involve in crimes like theft, murder, robbery, etc. A poor person remains uneducated & is forced to live under unhygienic conditions in slums. There are no proper sanitation & drinking water facility in slums & he falls ill often & his health deteriorates. A poor person generally dies an early death. So, all social evils are related to poverty.

For instance, Nigeria had one of the world's highest economic growth rates, averaging 7.4% according to the Nigeria economic report released in July 2014 by the World Bank. Following the oil price collapse in 2014-2016, combined with negative production shocks, the gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate dropped to 2.7% in 2015. In 2016 during its first recession in 25 years, the economy contracted by 1.6%.

Poverty remains significant at 33.1% in Africa's biggest economy. For a country with massive wealth and a huge population to support commerce, a well-developed economy, and plenty of natural resources such as oil, the level of poverty remains unacceptable. However, poverty may have been overestimated due to the lack of information on the extremely huge informal sector of the economy, estimated at around 60% more, of the current GDP figures.] As of 2018, Population growth rate is higher than economic growth rate, leading to a slow rise in poverty. According to a 2018 report by the World Bank, almost half the population is living below the international poverty line ($2 per day), and unemployment peaked at 23.1%.

Poverty in Nigeria can also be caused by the political instability of the country. However, these programs have largely failed to overcome the three reasons for this persistent poverty: income inequality, ethnic conflict, and political instability.