



A Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty



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Global Poverty Fact Sheet

Those living in impoverished developing countries are more than just income poor—their lives, health, and well-being are all negatively impacted by poverty.

Who lives in poverty?

- Today our world houses 6.47 billion people.
- Almost half of the people in the world live on less than two dollars a day, while more than one billion people live on less than one dollar a day.

Poverty affects access to nutritious food and clean water.

- Among those living on less than one dollar a day, many have problems obtaining adequate, nutritious food for themselves and their families. As a result, 815 million people in the developing world are undernourished—they consume less than the minimum amount of calories essential for sound health and growth.
- Hunger manifests itself in many ways other than starvation and famine. Most poor people who battle hunger deal with chronic undernourishment and vitamin or mineral deficiencies, which result in stunted growth, weakness, and heightened susceptibility to illness.
- Poor nutrition and calorie deficiencies cause nearly one in three people to die prematurely or have disabilities.
- Throughout the world, water supplies in developing countries are contaminated with a wide variety of microorganisms that cause

typhoid, diarrheal diseases, amoebic dysentery, cholera, and other notoriously virulent diseases. Every day almost 40,000 people die from causes directly related to contaminated water.

Children are disproportionately affected by poverty.

- Every day, more than 16,000 children die from hunger-related causes—one child every five seconds.
- Today, more than 11 million children under the age of 15 living in Sub-Saharan Africa have lost one or both parents because of HIV/AIDS.
- There are 115 million primary school-age children who are out of school. This number equals 18%—or almost one in five—of the children in this age group worldwide.

Poverty affects women.

- One woman dies every minute as a result of problems in pregnancy or childbirth. Across much of Africa and South Asia, pregnancy and childbirth represent the single biggest cause of mortality among women of childbearing age.
- Out of the 550 million working poor in the world, an estimated 330 million, or 60%, are women.
- Recent estimates place the number of illiterate adults at 905 million worldwide. Of this 905 million, 587 million, or 65%, are women.

Trade affects poverty.

- Farmers in developing countries cannot compete with highly subsidized farmers in industrialized countries who can afford to sell crops below production costs. Government subsidies in industrialized countries drive down the market price of certain crops. Some experts estimate that U.S. cotton subsidies lower the world price of cotton by about 10%.
- Agriculture is the major—sometimes the only—source of export earnings for many poor countries. These countries want to sell their goods in U.S. and European markets but often have a hard time doing so because of trade barriers, like tariffs. A tariff is essentially a tax levied on goods when the goods cross the border.

Debt affects people living in poverty.

- The total external debt of low-income countries is about \$523 billion. The total debt service being paid every day by low-income countries is \$90 million.
- For every \$1 received in aid grants, low income countries pay \$2.30 in debt service.
- Many African countries spend more on repaying debt than on either health or education. For example, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Senegal, Uganda, and Zambia all spent more on debt service than health in 2002.

Donor countries and aid affect poverty.

- Donor countries' official development assistance (ODA) to poorer nations has grown markedly in the past few years due to various emergency aid and relief efforts. But while funding for emergency aid and relief efforts has been increasing, funding to meet longer-term international development goals has leveled off.
- For decades, the United States ranked first among the developed countries in net disbursements of economic aid. The United States lost its number one rank twice—once in 1989 and once in 1993—but regained its leading position in 2001. Based on 2002 figures, the United States remains the leader in net disbursements of economic aid among developed countries.
- While the United States is ranked first among developed countries in total net aid, it falls near the bottom of the list when aid by developed countries is measured as a percent of gross national product (GNP). The United States gives 0.2% of its GNP in official development assistance.
- U.S. net development assistance has increased to current levels from 0.11% of gross national product in 2001.

For a list of sources used in the compilation of these facts, please visit www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/20061002CCAGPcitations.doc.



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