

THREE CONCEPTIONS OF POVERTY

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Since 2000, the Economic and Social Commission of Asia Pacific Assembly of the United Nations (UNESCAP) has launched three concepts which are closely related to each other to describe poverty; such as poverty of income, poverty of access, and poverty of power.

Poverty of income

Income or consumption is measured on average, through the numbers and percentages, the national and international poverty level, Gini coefficient to assess poverty, wealth gap, inequality and poverty level of a country.

However, although the figures must be used to easily measure and quantify, they cannot fully describe the shape as well as poverty assessment and the ability to escape poverty. Even these figures may also limit the understanding of real poverty.

Looking at the numbers, Vietnam is still very optimistic with the spectacular speed of poverty reduction over the past 20 years, while experts in the country have repeatedly warned that poverty still occurs.

Mr. T at the Thanh Thoi B Commune, Thap Muoi District, Dong Thap province, is the main provider in a family with two children and an elderly mother living on 3000m² of family land. He planted sugar cane and raised pigs and can afford to live and save money. Since 2003, sugar prices fell only 1,200 VND / kg and the price of pork only 15,000 VND / kg and he lost money. As many people, he tried to grow Strabismus (rush) with a loan of 2 million, but between planting to harvest, the price dropped to only 700 / kg and he lost all his money and was in debt causing his children to quit school so they could provide income for the family.

It can be seen only income is a sign of poverty or poor escape, but did not describe the cause and vulnerable situation, uncertain boundary between poverty and poor escape. More important than income, what they lack is to accumulate resources for life, safety, information and market orientation, and ways of agricultural production which are suitable time after time, and to secure loans when necessary. These elements exist, but the poor have little access to them. Therefore, poverty of income is closely related to poverty of the social approach.

Poverty of access

Poverty of access increases poverty of income and continues the cycle of poverty. The poor have no access to many of the services and basic infrastructure such as; from traffic, educational funding, clean water, housing, social security, and information policy.

Just being in debt means they could not get into on the waiting list for preferential loans given to local borrowers and they are forced to get the loan from *black credit* at the market with very high interest rates. Just due to Mr. T's harvest losses his children have no access to education.

Lack of access to services and basic infrastructure makes poor people more vulnerable to disease, and they had to pay more for medical expenses due to lack of insurance. Even buying drugs for mild illness is very difficult. When they get serious illness many families are forced to sell land to get money for treatment.

Children often have to miss school, go to work early in their life, and accept a life of hard living that can be brutal and violent.

Lack of access to information and policies cause the poor to become the victims of many factors; usury, purchase of poor quality farm produce, a general lack of understanding of markets and new technologies, as is the case Mr. T. in Dong Thap.

Even in many programs for the poor, they do not know very well. In a survey of households, most poor people said they did not know the criteria for selecting the poor households and cannot understand why they are on the poor list and then off the poor list. Asking why out of poverty, one family said: "I do not know why, people of the commune people's committee ask to take the poor book and not pay back, and now I'm not in the list of poor households".

All the poverty alleviation programs of government agencies and NGOs have a slogan that says: "Help the poor to help themselves". Meanwhile, the poor live in a state of blind information and access to many facilities, basic services and policies, so how they can afford to help themselves?

Poverty of power

If the poor can access these policies and this information can it really help the poor? The answer is "yes" when it meets the needs of the poor and they can benefit from their practice. These relate to the poor having created conditions, making them capable, and having the power to participate in the opinion building process and policy decisions relating to them.

Therefore, when talking about the activities of social development and poverty alleviation, people often mention the word "empower" and that confused many people when translated into Vietnamese. It was then called "Advanced capacity "at the" empowerment "is at" strengthening ". It is very difficult to express this concept, as it is not only related to the capacity, rights, but also related to the intrinsic strength of each man. When there was power, the poor can " help themselves" out of poverty and be sustainable.

The poor not only suffer from income poverty and poor access, they are very poor in strength. They cannot ask about the reasons of his poor book or lost poor books, and don't know where to ask what they should plant, and how not to feed sustain more losses.

Having seen a group of workers building a water tank and a radio support program for poor people, I asked why it was so carelessly constructed. They answered calmly: "This is national money" I said, "But this tank is for the poor and if your children go to school in a school built carelessly by the national funds, what would you think?". He said that he was asked to do that. The people standing around it, who will be the beneficiaries of this project showed an indifferent reaction. Poor power can be seen very clearly when people are unable to act, impact, or affect the surrounding social environment, when it relates to their own lives.

Unfortunately, not only the poor have "poverty of power". In many parts of society violence and crime is increasing because people do not have enough inner strength to deal appropriately with people and life around them. Not only are students fighting poverty by this means of this power that the youth are being filmed and indifferent watching nearby is also very poor.

Teachers are also very poor and the creative power of dialogue is a set pattern of lessons in literature, but they are denied any thoughts contrary to honest "answers."

There are many local officials who say why not consult the people about their problems because they have decided they're very low knowledge about this subject.

Businesses, agencies or projects get profits at any cost, regardless of the environmental destruction to resources. They also have a very poor sense of the power of thought and effort away from the main block of life of their customers.

Any country where economic prosperity is only for a certain section of people and not all members of society, that country cannot be called strong. Poverty is not only related to part of the people that have low income. It involves all aspects of the mechanisms of social policy, educational philosophy and social behavior of different classes of people.

If we just follow the big projects, but forget the poor in all aspects we are quietly devastating the lives of not only the poor but all of us, as we are so very poor in vision.