

Psychology Can Contribute to Poverty Eradication

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Eradicating poverty must become an integral objective of all policies if we have any chance of accomplishing this goal within the next 15 years. The eradication process requires changes in attitude and in behavior of policy makers and policy implementers. It will take the involvement of experts in bringing about attitude change and behavioral change to design and implement poverty eradication programs. Psychologists are social scientists who bring scientific research and best practices to the process of changing attitudes and behaviors necessary to develop and implement programs to eradicate poverty. Psychologists have experience in every aspect of what is required to alleviate poverty in our world. Psychologists around the world could help governments design and implement poverty eradication projects and there are psychology associations accredited to ECOSOC as NGOs willing to assist the UN on a pro bono basis. Here are some of the necessary activities necessary to alleviate poverty in which psychologists can provide important assistance:

EDUCATION. People of all ages must be educated to participate in the technological revolution of the 21st century. There is an entire psychological discipline devoted to research and teaching in the modern world. They understand the value of education and can assist governments in planning educational programs for all ages to prepare them to hold jobs in this modern age.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP – Jobs that pay a living wage are essential for eliminating poverty. Jobs are created by entrepreneurs who know how to turn ideas into businesses that provide jobs for others. Organizational psychologists have developed entrepreneurship training programs that have been implemented in developing countries in Africa and have led to the development of new businesses and new jobs. Becoming a successful entrepreneur is a function of behavioral and attitudinal changes that can be learned. As part of the process the students start companies while being mentored by experts.

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS- Psychologists have developed entrepreneurial programs direct at helping women who are basically homemakers start businesses and contribute to the family income. The process begins with organizing women around their daily activities of raising children, planning for their families, managing household budgets, advocating for their children and husbands and organizing family life. The women are shown how their daily activities are in fact entrepreneurial and they have the knowledge and skills to begin small businesses as individuals and /or as collectives. The women add to their family income and develop a sense of pride and accomplishment that they bring to their daughters.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION – Conflict within and between nations is a major contributor to poverty. Under conditions of conflict there is no job creation but instead there is starvation, injuries, death, destruction, dislocation and an increase in poverty. Psychologists have studied the process of conflict and its resolution for years and have developed models for reducing conflict that have been tested and proven successful. Its oversimplified description involves seeking goals that are important to both parties, but which neither can achieve alone. It operates successfully in many places in the

world and in many situations. The policy of reducing conflict is necessary to eradicate poverty and psychologists can assist in this endeavor.

ECONOMIC PSYCHOLOGY – The economic policy of a nation is a major determinant of the level of poverty within that nation. Economic psychology determines the consequences of economic policy on the well-being of the individual. For example, there is much concern about mandating minimum wages in industries. There is no doubt that a living wage would improve the lives of millions. The question is, however, whether businesses can continue to exist if forced to pay a living or even a minimum wage to its employees. There is the argument that a minimum wage will mean businesses ceasing to exist and people becoming unemployed and then experiencing poverty. The answer is that there is a “tipping point” at which a wage can be paid and the company can be sustainable. This tipping point can be determined for industries in countries and regions and a fair wage can be paid. Economic psychologists can determine such points and help governments develop and implement such policies.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY – This branch of psychology deals with the relationship among people and between groups of people. This discipline has a great deal to offer procedures for eradicating poverty. Nations are composed of many different groups of people living in different places. For example, there are people who live in urban areas and people who live in rural areas, the latter group being mostly farmers. If the latter group is ignored as businesses are built in urban areas there is the risk of poverty increasing in rural areas and people suffering its consequences or leaving for jobs in urban areas. This would have negative consequences all around. Social psychologists involved in poverty eradication projects would be aware of this situation and advocate for policies aimed at keeping rural farms viable for the good of the nation. They would, for example, advocate for aid to farmers to teach them more modern ways of farming to improve their yield. They would advocate for development of rural infra structure to make travel and movement of produce and animals easier and faster. They would advocate for equality of programs for all parts of the nation. They would advocate for activities that reduced discrimination against certain groups and promote a procedure of equal opportunity for all the different groups residing within a country.

POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY – The political psychologist would act as the intermediary between those who recognize the need for a change in policy and those who develop the policy and those who must implement it. In most cases the need for a policy change derives from data about a situation that requires change to reduce poverty. The political psychologist will help develop the new policy so that it reduces poverty, meets the needs of the government and can be implemented successfully.