



Lesson 1: The roots of poverty

Materials required:

- a questionnaire for each student
- flipchart
- paper and markers for each group
- projector
- computer.

Introduction (5 mins)

Hand out the questionnaire at the beginning of the class to gauge the students' current level of understanding and interest in the issues surrounding poverty. Allow five minutes or so for students to complete, and then collect up the questionnaires.

Symptoms of poverty (15 mins)

Write on the chart or board:

'Symptom: a physical or mental feature that indicates a condition or problem.'

1. Split the students into small working groups (of about four or five).
2. Ask them to list as many symptoms of poverty as they can in five minutes. Ask them to imagine what they would see, hear or smell if they travelled to an area where people were living in poverty. How would they know these people were living in poverty? What would be different compared to a place where people were well off? (Try to get them to focus on symptoms alone – give an example if necessary.)
3. Give time for groups to discuss and write down answers.
4. Ask for feedback from each group, and write their answers up on the chart/board.

Some of the feedback might include:

 - lots of children with nowhere to go: could be orphans, could be trying to make a living on the street
 - no homes or shelter: people living out in the open
 - people seem listless: don't seem to have work
 - no schools or schools that lack facilities
 - lots of people are sick
 - lots of people seem to be on the move (are they refugees?)
 - people look hungry and emaciated
 - no toilets, poor sanitation
 - no clean drinking water
 - people are begging
 - no health care, clinics, doctors, nurses, or hospitals.
5. Where appropriate, ask the students to expand on their answers or share personal experiences. Challenge stereotypes that appear in the discussion, such as people living in poverty being lazy or unwilling to work.



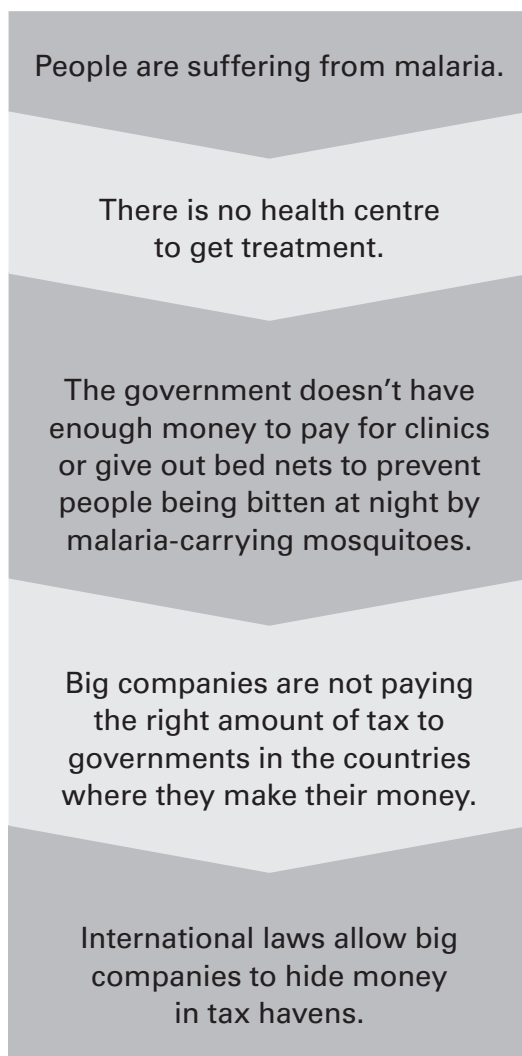
Causes of poverty (15 mins)

Write on the board:

'Cause: something that gives rise to an action or condition.'

1. Having identified many of the symptoms, explain to students that you would like them to take one (or a few) of their symptoms of poverty and track it/them back to the potential cause.

For example:



2. Give time for groups to discuss and write down answers.
3. Ask for feedback from the groups and write their answers up on the chart/board.

Be aware that some of the symptoms may be tracked to different causes. For example, people not having enough to eat could be caused by adverse weather conditions (perhaps due to a changing climate) destroying their harvest, or conflict may have displaced them from their land.

Some of the causes of poverty include:

- lack of rights
 - conflict
 - inequality
 - climate change
 - disasters
 - unjust trade rules
 - debt
 - tax injustice
 - gender inequality
 - corruption.
4. Ask whether students think it is better to spend our time changing the symptoms of poverty or the root causes of poverty. Have a discussion around which one the class would choose to do and why.



Conclusion (10 mins)

Write up on the chart/board and explain the following.

Poverty is caused by a lack of:

Personal power – health, education, mental well-being, dignified work and living conditions.

Economic power – income, freedom to earn a fair return on your labour, freedom from extreme inequality, access to or control over resources such as water and power supplies, economic security (eg being able to keep things such as harvests and money safe).

Social power – community well-being, social relations and social inclusion (eg being involved in community schemes such as food/grain banks when times are tough), ability to deal with emergency environmental conditions such as floods or droughts.

Political power – having the right to vote, being able to vote for whomever you chose without fear of violence or oppression, being able to get involved in decisions and schemes that affect your community or society.

Christian Aid, a charity that works with people from poor communities all around the world, believes that if we really want to end poverty, we must fight the root causes of it. Do you agree?