

## **Poverty: Who should be blamed?**

**Jeremiah Renzo Castro**

One sunny morning, I was riding a jeep on my way to class inside the university. The weather was hot and humid and it made the driver sweaty. The driver wiped his sweat with a face towel. He then takes a glance on the money he has earned so far that day. In his eyes, I could see that he is thinking how the money would fit his family's needs. He thinks that the problem is not him but it's the government. For him, the government is supposed to control the oil price hikes and the traffic.

Some militant groups echo what the driver thinks. They all think that it is the government's fault why they are starving, unemployed and most of all, unhappy. The solutions that the government are doing today are for them, short-term solutions. They are only short-term solutions because they only affect what is here and now. These solutions are not planned thoroughly and are rushed. It is said that what they do in the present is not at all beneficial for the growth of the country. It is also said that the government has been ineffective in the programs that they do. It has been ineffective because of the bureaucratic processes that bug government institutions down to the core. Planning is obviously required for every single thing that the government does. After all, they are in charge and it is also their responsibility to end poverty in this country.

The government has done some measures to alleviate poverty. One of these is the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program or also known as the Conditional Cash Transfer program. In this program, the government gives families cash assistance of around Php 6,000 per family along with social development through investments in manpower. While this idea looks good on paper, I find this program difficult to implement because of the gargantuan amount of people who are in poverty. Because of this, the government is forced to have strict eligibility requirements to be accepted in this program. However, I do not agree the part of cash transfers because giving money to poor people when they are not able to spend it wisely means that the government will eventually just waste the people's money on this very short-term solution. Also, some recipients of this program may end up being too dependent on this program instead of focusing on being productive citizens of the nation.

A related program with the CCT is the Pantawid Pasada program. In this program, jeepney drivers are given money in form of a card that can be used to buy fuel in participating gasoline stations. Like with its related program, I don't think that this is a great idea because it only gives them a temporary solution to an already long-term problem.

Another program of the government to alleviate poverty is to relocate illegal settlers back to their home provinces. I agree with this because there are large tracts of land there where the poor people can start over. These large tracts of land are arable which means that it can be used for agriculture and farming. It is good enough for me

because they will not only benefit from the farms by having their own food but also, they help in making the food supply of the country sustainable without resorting to imports which make our country fall into debt. I also think that this is a good idea because these lands are most of the time unused or fallen into disuse. Another reason that makes this idea a good one is that the poor people will also be near their families which can be used for support.

In relation to this, illegal settlers in some areas are forced to relocate in government lands that are far from the city. Most of them though, complain because of the fact that most relocation sites don't have electricity and water lines. They also complain that it is hard to access, which in turn makes them isolated from their places of work and education. I think that if the government wants the people to move to a place, they should be able to provide the basic necessities that are needed by the people.

The government's program of giving work is done through the Public-Private Partnerships. It helps in giving jobs due to the construction boom in this country for the past decade. Most jobs that are needed here are blue-collar jobs which are physical tasks. I personally think that this is just a temporary solution. The advantage for this is that the poor families are given the chance to work for them to earn money. The problem with this however, is that they are contractual which means that they only work for a short period of time which can last for a quarter up to half a year. This means that these jobs are unstable and that they can lose their jobs in an instant. This would also mean that they will not be able to earn an amount of money that can be used to build a small business.

While work is given to the adults, the government also gives education for the adolescents. TESDA, a government agency, is in charge of giving free education for the masses. The out-of-school youth mostly benefit from this because of the fact that they were able to finish formal schooling. Most courses offered by this agency are vocational courses which are beneficial to the poor people to find work or to create a small business. I think that this is a great midterm solution for poverty. Even if there is a high unemployment rate in the country, there is a great demand for people who are currently taking these courses. Taking these courses are practical and it gives a great advantage which will help them in getting work and later on, earning money.

The government has done its part in alleviating poverty. However, some people dismiss the government's efforts to help them get out of poverty. This should mean that they are now responsible for their actions because they are already on their own.

A great number of poor people in the country are uneducated. Some are unable to finish high school, elementary school even. They have left formal education early to help their family earn spare change for them to survive their everyday lives. They are then obliged to leave their farmlands and go to the large cities looking for work and to be shocked that they would not find a job in the city because of lack of education. Because they are uneducated, they are unable to work for a white-collar job which mostly requires collegiate level of knowledge. They are then forced to do menial jobs like driving, washing clothes, domestic helpers or septic tank cleaners.

The problem of having no education also leads to unemployment. It is because most jobs in the city need at least high school attainment. With most people in the provinces that leave for the major cities having no education, they are unable to work in the city. That leads to hunger because they do not have any money to buy food. Most people in the provinces also don't have relatives in which they could stay on. Because of this, they are forced to live in slums or places in which settling is illegal like under bridges, canals, flyovers etc.

If they want to actually leave the state of poverty, they should also work together with the government because they are already trying their best to help out. They have been given ways to cope up and be able to rise from the great sorrow and horror of poverty. They should be responsible for what they are doing today because their poverty would then pass on to their children and another cycle will just follow.

Some people are poor because even if they have a job, they are not able to control their spending. That is the main reason they are poor. Controlling expenses and spending is an integral way of raising a family. It is their duty and a great responsibility to budget their money to their needs. They should not be carried away by the amount of money they earn.

While some people give a lot of effort trying to get out of poverty, some of these people are lazy. They are lazy in a sense that they are already contented with what they

have and prefer sticking to the status quo. In my opinion, I think that this is the worst kind of poor person because they don't even exert effort to get out of poverty. They just want to be burden to their families and most importantly, to the nation. These lazy ones are the ones who tend to be bad guys and criminals. Because of the fact that they are lazy, they use brute force to gain money. Some of them resort to doing crimes like robberies, hold-up, and kidnappings. I think that to resolve crime, we should be able to contain poverty first. We should be able to make them work in order for them not to engage to illegal ways of being rich.

In conclusion, our society still has a large number of people who are below the poverty line. Every part of society has made its part to alleviate or to lessen the effects of poverty. However, these efforts are put in vain by bureaucratic nightmares and uncooperative constituents which make poverty still a common sight until today. This implies that what we are doing right now is not enough to end poverty. It is our duty, as members of the Philippine society, to help poor people in the greatest way possible.