

# **Report On Poverty In Cebu City**

**By**

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## **I. Introduction**

Poverty eats up the dignity of a person. It degrades, demeans and dehumanizes us. Reports from prestigious newspapers show the headlines: “Poverty measured using the international poverty line of 1 dollar per day has been falling steadily”, “Income distribution in the Philippines beset by inequality”, “Sustained economic growth has not been pro-poor”.

How do we measure poverty? What aspects need to be considered?

Distinctions must be clearly defined between absolute and relative poverty, between objective and subjective poverty and chronic and transient poverty.

In the Philippines, the way to measure poverty is based on income. But incomes are often varied, particularly for workers in the informal sector, and fluctuate not only from year to year but also from month to month.

As long as there are many people go on begging in the streets and scavenging in different forms, that’s a proof of income poverty in Cebu City.

Read the report below.

## **II. Mendicancy and Begging: A Measurement of Income Poverty**

Just passing by the major thoroughfares, walking across junctions/streets or within the vicinity of the churches/parks in Cebu City, we might be bothered by or notice the presence of ambulant beggars nudging, hands open and hands slightly closed cueing that needs some coins to buy food. Most of them are children; some of them are adult women holding their infants while the other hands are made open suggesting for some coins to be handed over. They are also some elderly who appear begging despite in their advanced age. Their clothes look tattered.

There are also beggars who are not ambulant but rather are sedentary, are concentrated on some specific locations. At the beginning of September, these groups of beggar start planning where they should situate. September is to set the mood for Christmas in December. They beg until December. They usually do it during nighttime, settling at sidewalks or pavements even sleep there until morning using cardboard as sleeping mat. They do it collectively with members of the family even infants and toddlers with them. Moved by the condition, many passing cars stop and someone get alighted and bring some pack of fruits/food and non-food items for the families on the pavements. In the morning,

what they receive shall be sold to small store in a lesser price. They would like to convert into cash rather than keeping them. They argue that they can't keep the food given because there are no cooking pots where they can cook.

Another season that they will continue settling on the sidewalks must be during Sinulog in January, also in April for the Holy Week wherein many Catholic devotees are geared towards almsgiving.

What is gruesome in begging is that children are sent or forced by their parents not solely for survival purposes but for gambling and to buy illegal drugs such as locally known *shabu*.

According to Atty. Jocelyn Pesquera, the head of Anti-Mendicancy Ordinance of Cebu City Government, the beggars in Cebu City seem to be earning about Php 7,000.00 a month from the month of September-April. It is very lucrative.

Let us turn the other dehumanizing condition in Cebu City – the presence of scavengers. We might be touched looking at them. Scavengers are those who collect waste/refuse as a means of living. There are scavengers with empty sacks who just walk through one place to another looking for waste that can be sold such as empty bottled water, aluminum can, items of bronze component, tin, iron and others. There are also scavengers who are just waiting outside the fast foods at closing time in the night wherein waste be bundled and be readied for the coming garbage trucks. Scavengers come faster than the garbage trucks. They sort out and keep waste that can be sold. There are groups of scavengers who would be at the landfill or the dumpsite. This landfill is known as Inayawan landfill.

Inayawan landfill is located in the South outskirts of Cebu City. All garbage trucks go there and dump the waste of Cebu City some 400 tons a day. Adult men and women, children of school age and even 3-year-old children with the parents are present at the landfill in the hope of getting good collection of waste in exchange of bread on the table. Items/materials most sought for are cans of aluminum component about Php 60.00/kilo and insulated wire about Php 200.00, if none of them can be found, lesser value can be taken such as cardboard, tin, empty bottled waters , iron and others at least there is something to earn.

The scavengers have basket to keep the waste of value, using metal with hook at the end and tip the rubbish. What they have collected will be brought to station outside of the dumpsite for valuation and weighing the waste by the buyers.

Children who feel the pinch of hunger will help their parents. They help after class hours or weekends. Many of the children would be ending at dropping out from school. Those dropped out graders will be

working around the clock at the site. But on matters of health issues, they are vulnerable to sharp nails, injury from trucks/ bulldozers and combustion of methane gas.

On average, they earn about Php 100.00/day equivalent to 2 American dollars.

### **III. Definition of Poverty**

According to Asian Development Bank, poverty is defined as a deprivation of essential assets and opportunities to which every human is entitled. Clearly, the mendicants and scavengers are deprived of human capital, physical capital and financial capital.

### **IV. Asset Categories**

#### **A. Human Capital**

- Utilization of skill, knowledge and good health to be able to work and earn a living. In human capital, education and health should be invested.

##### **A.1 Access to Education**

According to the findings of the survey conducted by Family Income and Expenditure Survey(FIES) and Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (APIS), it shows that those who have no schooling have the highest poverty incidence 52.8 % while those in college graduate have lower poverty incidence 1.6 %. The poverty gap decreases with higher levels of schooling, implying that more education leads to better opportunities for higher levels of income. (January 2005)

#### Reality Assessment

##### 1. Falling Enrollment Rate

- It's decreasing the number of children get enrolled to elementary level aged 6-12 is very low.
- In 2000 - 2001 – 96.8 %, 2002-2003 – 91.2 %, after then, appears to be in decreasing.
- Nearly one quarter of children aged 13-16 were not getting a high school education.
- The most commonly cited reason for not attending school was the high cost of education. Public education is free in theory, but there are many costs associated with a free education including uniforms, supplies, transportation and other school collections such for the academic projects. This cost can be prohibitive for the poorest

## 2. Falling Survival Rate

- Number of students who start grade 1 that go on to complete grade 6 is very low.
- For every 100 children who enter first grade , only 67 graduate.

## 3. Falling Quality Education

- The teacher –to- pupil ratio is high, and has been growing steadily with the average class size of 45 pupils

## REVALIDATION

As teacher of public school, I have noticed children during school hours are not in school. They are in the streets begging, selling bottled water, newspapers, scavenging. They earn for living.

In my class (High School grade 9), the number of students registered as enrolled of school year 2014-2015 are 47. But 7 of them are dropped out. The reason cited is due to poverty whose parents have no job anymore. I have been asking also the other classes, the same phenomenon, the average of 10 students dropped out from the roll.

The bigger is the size of class results in a classroom not conducive in learning. Electric fans can't give enough ventilation, each student plus external factors generated heat that cause discomfort among students. This affects also the behavior of students. They don't pay attention to the activities set by teaches. Unwanted noise is generated. They fidget among themselves. Teachers reprimand them even scold them. Instead giving academic activities, time is spent to scolding.

## **A.2 Access to Health**

- Health status affects a person's ability to go to school, to obtain work. The poor are more likely to suffer from ill health.
- 20% of those who used private health facilities indicated non-availability of public health facilities.

## REVALIDATION

- In Cebu City alone, there is one Medical Center, Cebu City Medical Center, after the damage of the building due to earthquake, is transferred to the premises of Cebu City Fire Department. Those seriously ill, shall be advised to admit at Don Vicente Sotto Medical Center of the Cebu Province.

- While it is true that medical checkup is free, but when the doctor prescribes medicine and asks for laboratory exam, that is where the headaches emerge. The medicines and laboratory exams are not free.
- Though some helped by the politicians, good that if you are friends of the politicians giving votes to them, if not, you can't avail of the help of the politicians.
- If you work in informal sectors, you can't receive PHILHEALTH benefits, there is a promise by the government to give PHILHEALTH insurance to the poorest and the elderly, but it remains to be seen.

### **B Financial Capital**

- Refers to earned income, savings, remittances, access to credit and so on.
- Salaries and wages are the most dominant source of income 54.2%. In Cebu City, 35.6 % for wages and salaries, and 20.5 % for other sources.
- The poor are generally able to save. They spend more than they earn, also known as dissaving. Pattern of dissaving among the poor has worsened.

### **REVALIDATION**

- To get employed in a certain company is very difficult for the poor; the requirements alone are tremendous such as police clearance, medical exam and many others. The cost associated to it is relatively high.
- Relatively good numbers of applicants are not hired due to health problems such hepatitis, the common recorded health problem. Other reasons are poor skills, criminal record, positive as drug user.
- The common source of income of the poor:
- Trisikad driver, laborer, construction worker, sidewalk vendors, taxi/truck/jeepney drivers, security guard, canvasser, ambulant vendor, carpenter, begging, scavenging.
- Some households have home-based income such as hanging rice making, shell craft making, rug making.
- Some of them recourse to illegal manner such as swindling, snatching, pick pocketing, burglary, theft, robbery.

### **V. Attempts of Begging and Scavenging Reduction**

- The National government has initiated a 4 P's (Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program), a form of conditional cash assistance to the poorest households.

- Cebu City government has given scholarship program those would like to get enrolled in college.
- Cebu City government has given feeding program those children working at Inayawan dumpsite.
- The poor with skills are given access to microfinance loan with low interest.
- Scholarship given by private sectors like NGO/PO and other foundations
- Adoption of children by rich families.

## **VI. Conclusion**

It is not easy to help the poor uplifting them to be living in decent life. It is a big challenge. The cycle of poverty remains at work among the poor. Sometimes they like to be that way. They don't like to help themselves. Children are affected. Children are forced to help parents earn a living. Instead at school, some of them are seen in the streets begging and scavenging. It's sad phenomenon. One time, a bony child was invited in fast food for a lunch; the philanthropist was surprised that the child was not eating with her. Rather she asked to wrap the food and would like to bring the food home. The child can't do eating in absence of her parents and siblings. After having done the wrapping of food, the child hurried to go back home with the food at hands and shared that to her family. Despite parent's maltreatment to her, she displays unconditional love, a noble act.

Though sometimes we feel disappointed or get tired of helping them, we will not lose hope. Our help must be anchored on the help of school, community, parents and other institutions such as church. Helping together empowers us living the motto: "With the poor against poverty"

*Sesaldo 4/3/2015*