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## **Input I „what is understood under “poverty”**

### **What actually is poverty and wealth?**

- Definitions („Britannica“)
  - “Poverty, the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions. → <https://www.britannica.com/topic/poverty>
  - “Wealth is an accumulated store of possessions and financial claims. It may be given a monetary value if prices can be determined for each of the possessions” → <https://www.britannica.com/topic/distribution-of-wealth-and-income>
- How is poverty measured? a basic distinction is made between absolute and relative poverty
  - Absolute poverty
    - Denotes a state in which the basic supply is not available.
    - Was introduced by the president of the World Bank to get an overview of "the problems of the (so-called) developing countries
    - indicators to measure absolute poverty: Per capita income, calorie intake per day, average life expectancy, infant mortality, birth rate
    - Households with a (weighted) income below \$3.10 per day are considered "poor
    - Households with a (weighted) income of less than \$1.90 per day are considered "extremely poor
  - Relative poverty:
    - Relative poverty affects persons whose income is below the respective country-specific poverty threshold. The income calculation takes into account both the different household structures and the savings effects that result from living together. The incomes are thus weighted.
    - Does not measure the actual material standard of living of people, but only the proportion of their income compared to the social standard Depending on the area where the measurement is taken (region, nation state, city, etc.)
  - According to the [most recent estimates](#), in 2015, 10 percent of the world's population or 734 million people lived on less than \$1.90 a day.
  - Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are [expected to see the largest increases in extreme poverty](#), with an additional 32 million and 26 million people, respectively, living below the international poverty line as a result of the pandemic.
  - In 2016, 55 per cent of the world's population – [about 4 billion people](#) – did not benefit from any form of social protection

### **Poverty and the SDGs**

- SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Targets:
  - 1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day
  - 1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions
  - 1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable
  - 1.4 By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance,

natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance

- 1.5 By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters
- 1.A Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions
- 1.B Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions
- Even before COVID-19, baseline projections suggested that 6 per cent of the global population would still be living in extreme poverty in 2030, missing the target of ending poverty. The fallout from the pandemic threatens to [push over 70 million people](#) into extreme poverty.

### Self-reflection

- Do you agree with the definition of „poor“?
- Who do you think is „poor“?
- Is your country, where you live in considered as poor?
- Have you ever felt poor?

### Input II – critics on the poverty term

#### Change of perspective: Poverty in Chiapas?

- According to statistical calculations, 76.4% of the people living in Chiapas live in poverty, 29.7% in extreme poverty.
- On the other hand, Chiapas is considered the tourist hotspot because of its incredibly rich and diverse biodiversity and beautiful nature
- Over 12 indigenous languages are spoken in Chiapas
- The Zapatistas use political means to fight for the rights of Mexico's indigenous population, but also generally against neoliberal economic policies and for autonomous self-government.
- If you search for "Chiapas" on google, pictures of waterfalls, indigenous buildings, green forests, cultural diversity...
- Lonely Planet: "Chilly pine-forest highlands, sultry rainforest jungles and attractive colonial cities exist side by side within Mexico's southernmost state, a region awash with the legacy of Spanish rule and the remnants of ancient Maya civilization. Palenque and Yaxchilán are evocative vestiges of powerful Maya kingdoms, and the presence of modern Maya is a constant reminder of the region's rich and uninterrupted history."  
<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/mexico/tabasco-and-chiapas>

#### Change of perspective: other critics on poverty

- In the definition of poverty and the establishment of a general understanding, a power relationship is inscribed who defines what is considered "poor"?
- Numbers used to calculate statistical poverty are often not valid complex calculations of indices, can lead to misinterpretations
- Nation-states are used as a basis to determine poverty - it is not taken into account that there are large regional differences in different countries

- Poverty discourse is oriented to the "development discourse" determined by countries of the Global North
  - what is considered poor and "less developed" is a political question embedded in global power relations
  - It depends on which countries are defined as "poor", what access they have to subsidies ("development aid") Calculations have errors
  - For example Namibia: Namibia has been labelled a "Lower Middle Income" country, but the figures obscure the actual poverty caused by the extreme social inequality - mainly blacks and People of Color are affected by poverty while the white descendants of the colonial masters have a very high income
  - Power Relationship: Colonialism
- The concept of poverty is based on the global neoliberal economic system
  - Those who have work and earn money are considered "rich" and are not dependent on social benefits.
  - Gap between rich and poor is growing 56% of the world population owns only 1.8% of the world's wealth, 0.9% of the world population owns 44% of the world's wealth.  
(<https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/384680/umfrage/verteilung-des-reichtums-auf-der-welt/> )
  - Power Relationship: Capitalism
- The understanding of poverty is based on Western assumptions about what is considered poor
  - In addition to the Western understanding of "poverty", where else on earth someone is considered rich is someone who has a large social network, social authority, larger families, biodiversity, etc..
  - Example: Chiapas, Mexico
- Who is considered "rich" and who "poor" in which contexts?
- Promotion of stereotypical, racist images through the use of a one-sided concept of poverty
- On the other hand, it does also make sense to question the "concept of wealth": who is rich? Who has great influence on society, economy etc.? Who are the super-rich and what is their responsibility in the global society?

#### The danger of a single story...

- From a power-critical perspective, it is important to reflect on the concept of poverty --> danger of reproducing racist, classicist, sexist stereotypes
- "Poor" people are attributed qualities such as, stupid, lazy, talentless, simple, lack of skills and knowledge their identity is reduced exclusively to "being poor"
- BUT: global power structures exist and lead to unequally distributed monetary wealth → we need to redefine poverty

#### One way to redefine poverty:

- Reflect about own stereotypes
- To call a person or people or regions or continents being "impoverished"
- Separate the person to the cause of poverty → no one is "just poor"
- Visibilized global power structures and those who are responsible for poverty: The Nation-State model, the global economy, Multilateral Organizations (IMF, WB), Development/Aid Organizations, Foundations, Governments in their different levels, Civil Society Organizations and individuals.

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- Name the problem as it is: hunger as lack food sovereignty, a lack of public services (health, security, and education), inequality, corruption, business out of poor people, etc.
  - Advocate for policies like: basic income (universal or) on voluntary basis, and universal health insurance (based on healthy diet and prevention on diseases, not only technology and effective medication)

Resources:

- <https://www.bpb.de/nachschlagen/zahlen-und-fakten/globalisierung/52680/armut>
- <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armut>
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wealth>
- <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/>
- [https://www.iz3w.org/zeitschrift/ausgaben/336\\_Armut/vermessung](https://www.iz3w.org/zeitschrift/ausgaben/336_Armut/vermessung)
- [https://www.coneval.org.mx/coordinacion/entidades/Chiapas/PublishingImages/Pobreza\\_2018/Pobreza2018.jpg](https://www.coneval.org.mx/coordinacion/entidades/Chiapas/PublishingImages/Pobreza_2018/Pobreza2018.jpg)
- **PERIPHERIE** Nr. 120, 30. Jg. 2010, Verlag Westfälisches Dampfboot, Münster, S. 452-477  
Franziska **Dübgen** „Respect the Poor“? Postkoloniale Perspektiven auf Armut\* online  
verfügbar: <file:///C:/Users/info/AppData/Local/Temp/24066-25218-1-PB.pdf>
- [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ej%C3%A9rcito\\_Zapatista\\_de\\_Liberaci%C3%B3n\\_Nacional](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ej%C3%A9rcito_Zapatista_de_Liberaci%C3%B3n_Nacional)