**Conference:** TISMUN I

**Forum**: General Assembly

**Issue**: Measures to Reduce Poverty

**Student Officer**: Cindy Leow

**Position**: Co-Chair of the General Assembly

**Student Officer Profile**

Hello! I’m Cindy and I’m 16 going on 17 this year. I was a student at Sri Garden International (now called Taylor’s International School, as you know) and having completed my IGCSEs, I graduated last year. I’m currently taking a gap year until I begin schooling again in August for the IB Diploma at IGB International School. I’m now dabbling into different things such as interning at multiple companies, social media marketing, participating in MUN conferences, fitness, creative & article writing, doing charity for disabled children, and blogging. This will be my first time chairing a committee, though I’ve attended about 10 conferences before this. I hope this will be a wonderful experience and I’m excited to meet all of you and to listen to what you have to say.

**Statement of the Problem**

Poverty -- a state of being poor that unfairly deprives worthy humans of a life that is sheltered, nourishing, full of opportunity and salubrious. Every human deserves to grow. Every human deserves as many opportunities as the other, despite their geographical location, their gender, their race, or their financial status. Every human deserves to work, and every human deserves the right to an education.

Instead of that consummate ideal, in reality, the World Bank estimates about 1.4bn people to be living under $1.25 per day. Moreover, this data still does not take into account the global food crisis and the rising costs of living, which is estimated to put another 100 million people in poverty over the next few years. Poverty is internationally measured by Gross Domestic Product, literacy rate, Human Development Index (HDI), infant mortality, unemployment rate, etc. According to these statistics, among the poorest countries in the world are Togo, Haiti, Angola, Afghanistan, etc.

To address a problem effectively, we need to know its causes. Poverty is an extremely convoluted social issue, and trying to find its cause is like literally trying to dig into soil in a forest to uncover a tree’s roots. There are no main causes for poverty, but instead, all of these issues spiralling into the perplexing situation we have today: war. Famine. Corruption. Lack of a viable political structure. Lack of education, leading people to be unable to find jobs, leading to no wages and the consequent poverty. Lack of jobs available. Economic structure, especially in developing countries. High taxation. High inflation and high costs of living. High unemployment. High income inequality. Low wages. Discrimination at work. Exploiting workers. Marital abuse. Teenage pregnancy. A high divorce rate, leading to the feminization of poverty -- due to the fact that fathers usually earn the money in a family. High population growth rate, leading to extremely high pressures on resources and overpopulation. High medical bills. Natural disasters.. All these things can strip a country and its people of its rightful dignity. Knowing the causes of poverty, it theoretically becomes ‘easy’ to find a solution to the problem; but what we also need is a social and economic consensus that poverty needs to be mitigated; because if people do not come together for this issue, the pretty and pompous resolutions we write will just be a piece of paper and nothing more.

Although most abundant in developing countries, the problem of poverty is still very prominent in most developed, first-world countries in very distinct and extreme societal inequalities. Most people classified as ‘poor’ in developed countries are much more likely to be richer than people in developing countries, but when compared to the rich people in first-world nations, they are still in ‘relative poverty’. This is the cardinal issue of inequality: the fact that there is so big of a difference between the incomes of the rich and the poor in most developing countries. Inequality is a social injustice, causing dissatisfaction and anger in many people, and also an economic inefficiency that is highly consequential in terms of the decadence of social integration, such as increased crime rates and violence, and poor health. In a psychological way, poor people feel defeated, destitution, and constantly oppressed, which leads to hopelessness, envy, anger, and hate, which destroys one’s mind. Psychological well-being is a very powerful thing; if billions of people continue to feel this same oppressed way, the wholesomeness and cohesion of a community will eventually be vanquished as the lack thereof completely prevents cooperation and interaction between these social strata.

**Definitions of Key Terms**

1. **Absolute Poverty:** A condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to services. (Official UN Definition)
2. **Overall Poverty:** Lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterised by lack of participation in decision making and in civil, social and cultural life. It occurs in all countries: as mass poverty in many developing countries, pockets of poverty amid wealth in developed countries, loss of livelihoods as a result of economic recession, sudden poverty as a result of disaster or conflict, the poverty of low-wage workers, and the utter destitution of people who fall outside family support systems, social institutions and safety nets. (Official UN Definition)
3. **Relative Poverty:** A state of poverty that is measured relative to the state of poverty other areas in the society, or to other countries.
4. **Gross Domestic Product:** The total of all monetary value of all final products and services produced within a country in a given amount of time or a year.
5. **Human Development Index (HDI):** It is a tool used by the UN; taking compositely literacy rates, real GDP per capita and income indices as a measure of human development for comparison between countries.
6. **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):** At a conference in New York in 2000, all 189 countries (then) in the General Assembly set out a millennium declaration that would ensconce them to the goal of creating a safer, more equal world by 2015. This declaration has eight major aims: to eradicate extreme poverty, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality, combat the HIV/AIDs and malaria, reduce child mortality, ensure environmental stability, and to develop a global partnership for development.
7. **Microcredit:** An extremely small loan given to impoverished people to help them become self employed. (Investopedia)

**Past UN Actions/Relevant Efforts**

* There have been many General Assembly resolutions on the topic of eradicating poverty, such as Resolution 65/214, 64/216, 63/175 and so on.
* The United Nations Millennium Development Goals - One of these goals had an aim to eradicate extreme poverty by aiming to halve the number of people living under $1 a day, to reduce half the proportion of people who suffer under extreme hunger and to provide full and productive employment for everyone, including women and young people. It is expected that global poverty will be at 15% by 2015, much below the goal of 23%.
* The UN has, in light of the MDGs, called for several global campaigning efforts to take place in the past decade. One example would be the “Stand Up and Take Action” campaign — organised by the Global Call to Action Against Poverty alliance of 190 countries — which has been highly successful over the tract of 5 years, with hundred millions of people all over the world participating.
* Under the Economic and Social Council of the UN, there is a United Nations Development Programme which aims to ratify all the Millennium Development Goals, working on their technicalities.
* Microfinance and microcredit loans have given incentive to hardworking and passionate, but poor people in rural areas to start up their own businesses, or use the money for their welfare, such as to health-care, to educate others, etc. This money — small as it is, even as little as $10 — have seen a myriad of success stories by thriving microentrepreneurs in places like Mongolia, India, Bangladesh, Africa, etc. Microcredit and microenterprise endeavours funded by the UNDP have highly helped to contribute to economic growth and have highly impacted lives in rural areas.

**Possible Solutions**

Poverty is inextricably connected to economic circumstances. Economic growth will not defeat poverty or create jobs, if it is not inclusive. Economic growth must also be centered to eradicate or mitigate the effects of inequality in order for it to reach the poor and in order to tackle the widespread issues of poverty. For starters, increasing national minimum wages to keep up with inflationary pressures would be beneficial in improving living standards everywhere in an economy, as well as using a more progressive tax system that would help tackle inequality. Transparencies in governments will need to be improved so as to prevent corruption and so governments will be coerced into making viable actions to solving poverty.

Children are the future of a nation. With that said, education is an important factor, as always, and so is health of a population. Education, if done right, will mould children into intelligent, ambitious young adults with a plethora of opportunity. A higher education almost guarantees higher skills, and higher skills guarantee higher-paying jobs, which will help break the vicious cycle of poverty. Education should not be limited to only children as well. Women being more educated would have access to more job opportunities and thus have less time to build a family, which, combined with rigorously implemented sex education, will help reduce the fertility and birth rate and thus will curb rapid growth of a population, putting a cap to the explosive pressure on resources. Besides, if people especially in third-world nations are more aware of sexual vulnerabilities such as STDs, unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions and rape through sex education, it would be rightful to expect a decrease in the occurrences of the aforementioned happenings and also transmittance of STDs such as HIV/AIDs, gonorrhea, etc. This will break the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Health on the other hand will ensure a healthy working population; mental health will ensure increased productivity and efficiency of workers.

Other countries with similar economic situations should take some examples from China and their institutional poverty-reducing strategies that do work, evinced from their all-mighty, growing industrial strength and their significant decrease in poverty levels after thirty years of following the same strategies. China’s more widely known policies may sound extreme, such as the one-child limit to control population growth, but China’s other policies such as its agricultural policies (agricultural tax exemption, subsidies & higher-priced agricultural procurement) have brought much prosperity to otherwise destituted farmers, and its policies for the expansion of social protection and social security coverage have encouraged a developed, balanced, and prosperous society.

“It is ignorance and conflict that lead to the vicious circle of poverty and the lack of development. And it is knowledge and cooperation that lead to the virtuous circle of prosperity and progress.” Thus, our goal in the General Assembly at TISMUNKL should be to establish a healthy climate of the encirclement & sharing of knowledge and to set goals of cooperation, not conflict to achieve.

**Useful Links for Further Reading**

1. UN: The Millenium Development Goals <http://www.un.org/en/mdg/summit2010/pdf/List%20of%20MDGs%20English.pdf>
2. Combating Poverty & Inequality <http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/(httpAuxPages)/92B1D5057F43149CC125779600434441?OpenDocument&panel=additional>
3. UNGA: Resolution 64/216 - Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008–2017) <https://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/policy_and_research/un/64/a-res-64-216.pdf>
4. UNGA: Resolution 65/214 - Human Rights & Extreme Poverty <http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/65/214>
5. UNGA: Resolution 64/175 <http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/63/175&Lang=E>

**Bibliography**

Global Issues: Poverty Around the World <<http://www.globalissues.org/article/4/poverty-around-the-world>>, November 12, 2011

Wikipedia: Causes of Poverty <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Causes_of_poverty>>

Pravda: Milennium Development Goals: Where are we? <<http://english.pravda.ru/opinion/columnists/07-04-2014/127277-mdgs-0/>>, February 7, 2014

Wikibooks: Development Cooperation Handbook/ The Factors Causing Poverty and Suffering <<http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Development_Cooperation_Handbook/The_factors_causing_poverty_and_suffering>>

Poverty and Social Exclusion: Absolute & Overall Poverty <<http://www.poverty.ac.uk/definitions-poverty/absolute-and-overall-poverty>>

UN: <<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=46002&Cr=mdgs&Cr1=#.U0UXLa2SywE>>

Brookings: <<http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2014/01/16-how-to-reduce-poverty-inequality-no-cost-sawhill>>