

Chapter 1

Why Study Sustainable Livelihood and Poverty Reduction?

Conceptualizing and Framing Realities of Poverty in Africa

ABSTRACT

This introductory chapter utilizes a framework of inquiry on why people are poor based on sustainable livelihood and poverty reduction. A livelihood is sustainable when it copes with and can recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation. This book examines the core issues, namely (1) the links between sustainable rural livelihoods and why people are poor; (2) the multilateral policy contexts of poverty; (3) poverty reduction within the context of globalizing world economy; (4) the economic and moral interdependence of humans and nature; and (5) the assessment of poverty among vulnerable groups, for instance, the elderly, the young, the ill, and the disabled. The themes of this volume orbit around characteristics and challenges of sustainable development, marginalization, social empowerment, social development theory, and poverty reduction strategies advocated by the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals worldwide.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is as old and as rife as humankind. A majority of human race has always suffered from poverty and intermittent hunger. The goal of this introductory chapter is to set the stage and provide an overview of the key issues, illustrating how, through relevant education, professional training, adoption of sustainable development strategies, targeted pro-poor policies, and global awareness raising approaches, people can bring about change as well as engage in the *debate and critique* of the arguments of poverty

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reduction (Elliot, 2012); Tarabini & Jacovkis, 2012). These contributions update the knowledge-base of existing informed social action of poverty reduction.

In the 12 chapters of this volume, the author seeks to show how humans understand the environment in which they live, their place in it, and how they make active choices to advance, support or undermine the *will* to eradicate poverty. This chapter acknowledges the difficult and wide-ranging issues of poverty reduction (OECD-DAC, 2001; UN, 2012; U. N., 2015). The shared core themes include poverty reduction studies in three areas, (1) reducing income poverty to improve human capabilities, (2) attaining a level of survival and aspects social of well-being; and (3) limiting extreme vulnerability. More precisely the author asks: Why does poverty continue to be such a worldwide problem? How can governments and nongovernmental agencies reduce poverty globally? The critical analysis and understanding of these matters are imperative and have implications worldwide for many generations to come.

In the past, investigators studied poverty and gathered massive amounts of data involving arrays of research techniques, from community-based local surveys to household surveys, to ethnographic studies, and country case studies. Investigators have also included econometric analysis that forms the basis of poverty studies today (O'Connor, 2009). However, clarity of policy relevance of the theories in this book expands our understanding of rural poverty, and in turn, models the complexity of poverty-related problems, the institutional contexts in which poverty problems arise, and the interrelationships between these (Marris & Rein, 1967; Moynihan, 1969).

The theory or explanation of poverty that one holds shapes the type of anti-poverty efforts that are pursued by community developers and policymakers. The fact that poverty theory addresses individuals, their culture, the social system in which they are embedded, the place where they live, and the interconnection among the different factors suggests that different theories of poverty must look at community needs from quite different perspectives. The *diversity and complexity* of causes of poverty allow for these multiple points of view. While none are “wrong,” it is consequential from a community development perspective which theories are applied to anti-poverty efforts (Bradshaw, 2007).

The overarching theme of this volume is—*why are people poor?* Efforts to overcome poverty are global and the strategies to achieve success include global aid and monitoring. The obvious question that rages on is this: Can the current International Development strategies and Targets (IDTs) improve global aid’s effectiveness at reducing rural poverty? If solutions to eliminate rural poverty have not worked for these years, what is different this time? Development targets are intended to help governments focus their resources and hold them accountable for subsequent actions. To serve these purposes, targets must be SMART; that is, they must be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (Hossain, Khan, & Islam, 2019).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a “One World” approach to the global development agenda with 17 Goals, 169 Targets and 232 indicators to be achieved by 2030 is an ambitious attempt to eliminate poverty everywhere. The key objectives of these goals are to: end poverty and hunger, ensure healthy lives and promote well-being, ensure inclusive and equitable quality education, promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

The targets established by the Sustainable Developing Goals (SDGs) help mobilize resources (human and financial) to achieve certain goals. Targets represent challenges. They indicate priorities, and they may serve as catalysts to focus the efforts of the various parties involved in reaching the targets. Mobilizing resources is without doubt a primary function of targets set by the international donor community such as the International Development Goals to overcome poverty.

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