

Proposal

Fast-tracking the alleviation of global poverty with a poverty tax

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Summary

This proposal is aimed at accelerating the Millennium Development's goal of eradicating extreme poverty

"We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanising conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion are currently subjected. We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want.

(2000 Millennium goal on poverty III)

The prediction by the World Bank that in 2015 there will still be one billion human beings living in extreme poverty (Less than US\$ 1.25 per day) is a moral obscenity in the 21st century. The availability of adequate shelter, clean water, electricity, affordable food, primary and higher education as well as medical facilities is the most basic of human rights.

Moreover, in this conflict-afflicted era when the world's seven billion population is expected to grow to eleven billion by 2050 (according to UN projections), should extreme poverty be permitted to grow exponentially, the stability and security of nations - particularly in the developing world - will be blighted by mass civil unrest plus massive inflows of economic migrants, crises that will be exacerbated by dwindling water/food/energy resources.

Poverty further impacts on countries' economies burdening health systems, necessitating state welfare and/or subsidies but, most importantly, people barely managing to survive cannot contribute to their respective economies by becoming consumers or with respect to their individual talents. President Bill Clinton reinforces this hypothesis. "It turns out that advancing equal opportunity and economic empowerment is both morally right and good economics because discrimination, poverty and ignorance restrict growth, while investments in education, infrastructure and scientific and technological research increase it, creating more good jobs and new wealth for all of us," he said.

There is no doubt that the Millennium Goal on Poverty – to reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than US\$ 1 per day and half those who suffer from hunger by 2015 - is considered to be the most successful anti-poverty campaign in history. But monitoring progress in certain parts of the world has proved difficult and there are wide discrepancies between states as well as urban and rural areas. It's worth noting, too, that in 2000 when world leaders gathered at the United Nations Millennium Summit and agreed to eight specific and measurable development goals, US\$ 1 a day had considerably more purchasing power than it does today.

"The Giving Pledge" launched by Bill and Melinda Gates – a commitment by the world's wealthiest individuals and families to dedicate the majority of their wealth to philanthropy – illustrates the willingness of at least 135 billionaires to give back to those in desperate circumstances. Their efforts should be congratulated and it's possible that the total donations could be equivalent to the GDP of several medium-sized countries, but, nevertheless, in comparison to the need, such generosity represents a drop in the ocean. Lifting a billion human beings out of poverty must ultimately be the responsibility of governments.

It is strongly contended here that an entirely fresh approach is required so as to keep pace with population growth, burgeoning refugee populations, as well as the re-emergence of previously eradicated diseases and inflationary trends. Ensuring that no human being is left behind is a task of major

proportions that should not be reliant on the fluctuating charitable propensities of individual governments or the philanthropic sentiments of wealthy individuals/charitable trusts/corporations.

The current paradigm has proven to be only a partially effective slow process. Children with swollen stomachs due to malnutrition, families sleeping under cardboard or corrugated iron and individuals dying from curable diseases because they are unable to afford medicines cannot wait and must be helped now.

What is proposed – and outlined in detail on these pages – is a global system of revenue-raising – or poverty tax. This is an idea that was advocated in the Senate by President Barack Obama in 2007. In 2012, the Director of the White House's National Economic Council Gary Sperling announced a plan for a 'global minimum tax' to ensure a massive transfer of poverty alleviating wealth to the United Nations, but, thus far, this has failed to get off the ground.

The herewith proposal is more ambitious. It requires governments to pledge two-and-a-half percent of their tax revenues – or an agreed percentage - annually to a new independent body to be founded in a neutral country, tasked solely with poverty-reduction that would be immune to political influence and subject to independent auditing.

Such taxation or global poverty tax would be levied at a suggested rate of two-and-a-half percent on revenues from taxation – income tax, sales tax, inheritance tax, import taxes, corporate taxes, capital value taxes etc. This might entail governments finding new revenue streams so as not to negatively affect fiscal budgets. It's worth noting that at least US\$ 18.5 trillion are deposited in tax havens representing a loss of US\$ 156 billion in revenue.

Religious perspectives on fulfilling humanity's needs

All the world's greatest faiths exhort its believers to take care of the poor. "He that has pity upon the poor lends unto the Lord; and that which he has given will he pay him again," is a quote from the Bible. Christians are commanded not to harden their hearts against those in need and, according to Jewish religious tradition, the spiritual benefits of giving to the poor is so great that the impoverished person actually does the giver a favor. The Bible and the Torah instructs Christians to practice tithing, which is termed *tzedaka* in Judaism, whereby a percentage of one's earnings should be dedicated to charity. Islam mandates giving to charity, the third pillar of the Islamic faith. At the core of the Muslim identity is care and compassion for fellow humans as outlined in the Holy Quran and the Hadith (the sayings of the Prophet (PBUH)). Allah characterises those who neglect to support orphans or the feeding of the poor as "those who reject the faith" (107: 1-3) while emphasising that a sincere act of giving will bring abundant rewards to the giver. "Those who spend their wealth in Allah's cause are like grains of corn which produce seven ears each bearing a hundred grains." (2: 261).

Moreover, those who don't necessarily identify with any creed or sect but who espouse humanist or secularist values/ethics feel an obligation to better mankind on a purely moral basis.

Christianity

'If you don't want your tax dollars to help the poor, then stop saying that you want a country based on Christian values' (President Jimmy Carter)

All Christian denominations have a common stance towards assisting those in need. During Jesus' Sermons on the Mount and the Plain, he urges his following to sell their earthly goods and give to the poor, so as to provide themselves with "a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys," adding, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (LK: 12.34)

Catholicism

"We cannot all do great things, but we can do small things with great love." (Mother Teresa)

Catholicism's best-known champion of the poor is undoubtedly Pope Francis, a Jesuit, who practices what he preaches within the confines of his status as Pontiff. The Pope has eschewed fine palace trappings preferring to be housed in a simple room and has set aside elaborate robes exemplifying his humility. He has acknowledged that his first priority is working for the poor.

"A way has to be found to enable everyone to benefit from the fruits of the earth, and not simply to close the gap between the affluent and those who must be satisfied with the crumbs falling from the table. But above all, to satisfy the demands of justice, fairness and respect for every human being," he's quoted as saying.

As a Bishop in Argentina, he was known to take the bus and used to cook his own basic meal each evening so that he could mingle with the less advantaged and experience their daily struggles so that others could

view the poor through his eyes. Emulating Jesus, he would often kneel before the poor and the sick to kiss their feet – the ultimate act of humility. Jesuit novitiates are obliged to undertake a journey bereft of money which forces them to survive purely on the goodwill of others. And they must spend time working with the poor, the dying, the mentally and physically disabled in hospitals before they can take their final vows.

Protestantism

The Protestant stance on poverty is a way of life for the Salvation Army with over 1.6 million members in 109 countries. Rather than focus on sermonising, this protestant denomination actively serves the poor with food and shelter for the homeless and assistance to the elderly, the physically and mentally disabled as well as young offenders and abused women. In the UK, the Anglican Church spearheads the drive against the soaring levels of food poverty, described as a “national crisis”, and in April, 2014, 600 church leaders from all Christian denominations signed-up to a letter to Prime Minister Cameron accusing the government for being in denial.

One of Time Magazine’s 25 Most Influential Evangelicals and author of the best-selling book “The Purpose-Driven Life”, Bob Warren launched a campaign against global poverty together with such stalwarts of the Evangelical movement Billy Graham and John Stott with this message. “I deeply believe that if we as evangelicals remain silent and do not speak up in defence of the poor, we lose our credibility and our right to witness about God’s love for the world”.

Church of the Latter Day Saints (LDS)

Founder of the LDS church, Joseph Smith said he intended to lay a foundation to eradicate every form of poverty according to the Lord’s mandated goal. In 1935, the Church established an extensive Welfare Services program with all church members encouraged to give their time and resources to the relief of suffering. Today, the Mormons rank high in the fight against poverty. Most LDS members believe in the necessity of fasting for 24-hours each month in order to give the equivalent cost of two meals or more as an offering; they are also bound to provide charitable contributions. The Utah-based church has invested heavily in global programs to alleviate communities suffering from a lack of food, clean water and medical supplies.

Judaism

“Anticipate charity by preventing poverty; assist the reduced fellow man, either by a considerable gift or a sum of money or by teaching him a trade or by putting him in the way of business so that he may earn an honest livelihood and not be forced to the dreadful alternative of holding out his hand for charity. This is the highest step and summit of charity’s golden ladder.” (Maimonides)

Unlike Christianity that believes poverty is a virtue because the poor are closer to the Kingdom of Heaven, material wealth is prized in the Torah and seen as a sign of divine favour, yet, wealthy Jews are under an obligation to alleviate the suffering of the poor and all Jews are commanded to give at least ten percent of their net income to charity. Moreover, giving is inherent in Jewish culture as Richard Schwarz emphasises in an article titled “The Jewish Response to Hunger”. He quotes the Hebrew prophets criticising the selfish and the greedy. “Woe to those who are at ease in Zion...Woe to those who lie upon beds of ivory and stretch themselves upon their couches...Who drink wine from bowls and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved at the ruin of Joseph.” (Amos 6:1,4,6) The prophet

Jeremiah said: "Happier were the victims of the sword than the victims of hunger, who pined away, stricken by want of the yield of the field." (Lamentations 4:9).

"In the Jewish tradition, failure to give charity is equivalent to idolatry. This may be because a selfish person forgets the One Who made us all, and in becoming preoccupied with personal material needs makes himself or herself into an idol. So important was the giving of charity by Jews that Maimonides was able to say: "Never have I seen or heard of a Jewish community that did not have a charity fund." Charity was considered so important that it took priority even over the building of the Temple. King Solomon was prohibited from using the silver and gold that David, his father, had accumulated for the building of the Temple, because that wealth should have been used to feed the poor during the three years of famine in King David's reign (1 Kings 7:51)" writes Schwarz.

Whether motivated by faith or Jewish tradition/culture, it's a fact that Jewish donors are among the most generous Americans according to the results of a 'Connected to Give' report. In 2010, Jews took five out of six spots in the Chronicle of Philanthropy's List with less than a quarter going to Jewish causes.

Islam

Interfaith understanding and cooperation

Allah the Almighty says: "O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. [18]

This means that creating different nations and tribes on earth has an exalted end that Allah the Almighty wanted for us, that is to get to know each other and meet in cordiality, compassion, peace and security; not in war and confrontation. Another reason is to cooperate together for the benefit of mankind, in order to exchange benefits and get the good of the earth from each other. For example, when a nation is in shortage of something, it receives what is lacking from the other nation in return for another benefit for the other nation. This is how God created our motherland to benefit all humanity with all its good. The Holy Qur'an urges humans to get to know other nations and tribes, which unites them and makes all humans integrated in brotherly relations.

The Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), in his prayer to Allah the Almighty: "O Lord, make us benefit from our hearings, sights, strengths as long as we are alive, and make them benefit us in the afterlife." [19] He (PBUH) also says: "The most beloved people to me are those who benefit people the most." [20]

In this Prophetic Tradition, the universality and comprehensiveness of Islam gets clear and obvious, that seeks to benefit all humans from different nations, which is seen in the word "people" that includes Muslims and non-Muslims, as well as Arabs and Non-Arabs.

Islam's two axes of assisting the poor

Giving charitable alms to those who are deserving of help is the Third Pillar of Islam and, as such, is compulsory for Muslims, as outlined below:

The First Axis: Islam Eliminates People's Poverty and Guarantees for them Food, Clothes and Shelter to Lead a Decent Life:

Islam declared war against poverty and besieged it to maintain families and the society, to help it be stable and coherent; so, Islam makes it a must to provide a decent life for each individual in the society. This axis has several factors:

First, Work:

Religious texts clarify that a Muslim is required to work, and is obliged to seek livelihood for two key objectives; the first, is to get self-sufficiency and not to ask others for alms; the second, is to construct the earth and reproduce new generations. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) says: "Nobody has ever eaten better than what he eats from what he earns from the work of his hand, and Prophet David was eating from what he earned from the work of his hand." [21]

Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) also urges for cultivation and production, not only for the sufficiency of the individual, but also for the sufficiency of the society, the building of earth and the pursuit of life. He said: "Any Muslim who plants or cultivates something and a bird, man or animal eats from it, he gets good for it." [22]

Second, Zakat (Dues for the poor):

Zakat is the third pillar of Islam after the Testimony that first there is no god but Allah and Mohammed is the Messenger of Allah, and second, observing worship. Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) dispatched Mouaz to Yemen and said to him: "Invite them to bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that I am the Messenger of Allah. If they responded, then tell them that Allah the Almighty has enjoined upon you five prayers a day; if they responded, then tell them that Allah the Almighty has enjoined upon them alms from their money to be taken from their rich and returned to their poor." [23]

In this way, we have seen how Islam gives the poor his rights through obliging the rich to give the poor their dues from their money; and if every rich Muslim adhered to Zakat and gave the poor their dues from his money, we would not see any poor or one in need.

This was already achieved during the era of the fair Umayyad Caliph Umar bin Abdul Aziz, who increased spending on the poor and needy segments of the society, and gave them full care and secured sufficiency for them through Zakat and the other resources of the treasury.

His distribution policy sought to achieve sufficiency for all people, and this is clear in his speeches, where he said in one of them: "I wish that all the rich gather and give the poor their dues from their money until we all become on equal footing, and I'm the first one to do

Third, Absolute Alms Giving:

The verses of the Holy Qur'an came to warn with woe and threaten with doom in life and the afterlife unto who ignores the needy or those who deal toughly with the poor and the needy.

In Surat Al Moddather (The Enveloped in the Cloak), which one of the first Surat revealed of the Holy Qur'an, the Qur'an projects for us a scene of the afterlife, the scene of those of the right hand of the believers in Paradise asking about the criminals of the disbelievers and rejecters who are put in hell. The believers ask the people in hell about the doom they witness and the reasons why they are put in hell, and the non-believers answer that one of the reasons is wasting the right of the poor and leaving them in poverty and hunger.

Allah the Almighty says: "Every soul is a pledge for its own deeds; save these who will stand on the right hand. In the gardens they will ask one another; concerning the guilty: What hath brought you to this burning? They will answer: We were not of those who prayed; nor did we feed the wretched." [24] Feeding the wretched includes food, clothes, shelter and care.

The Holy Qur'an not only urges people to feed the wretched and give them care and warned from ignoring them, but also made it a must for every believer to give the poor his due and urge others to feed and take care of the poor and made ignorance of this right to the poor equal to disbelief in God.

Allah the Almighty also has made repelling orphans and urging not to feed the wretched among the signs of rejecting religion; hence, Allah the Almighty says: "Hast thou observed him who belies religion? That is he who repels the orphan, and urges not the feeding of the needy." [25]

Several verses of the Holy Qur'an evidence the obligation of working to support the poor and the needy, even through collecting alms for them from other people, so as to save themselves from the anger and punishment of Allah. Among the fruits of understanding this verse is the establishment of charities and social service societies, which serve people, help them and give them what they need; and so, those charities were inspired from the Holy Qur'an. [26]

Fourth, Waqf (Endowment):

Endowment is to donate a property and keep it for the benefit of people for their good.ⁱ The origin of endowment came from Umar ibn Al Khattab's saying to Prophet Mohammed (PBUH): "I have never got money better than that I get from the hundred shares I have in the land of Khaibar, and I want to give it to the poor. The Prophet (PBUH) replied: Endow its origin and give its fruits to the poor." [27]

This social endowment comes out of the endower's feeling of responsibility to the society, giving his money or part of it to serve the group, which at the end spread the spirit of co-operation, solidarity and brotherhood among the members of the Islamic society through fulfilling the needs of each other. There are different forms of endowment, such as that of mosques, schools, public libraries, hospitals, water troughs, public roads and tombs, as well as the endowment on the goodly loans, the non-usury loans, to those in need for money, which closes a wide door to usury. [28]

Fifth, Prohibiting Monopoly:

Monopoly means to buy commodities by traders and keep them in stock until their prices rise. This is prohibited in Islam, and the evidence for this prohibition is the Prophetic Tradition: "That who monopolises is wrongful." [29] And the wrongful is the sinner. The Islamic legislation's objective of prohibiting monopoly is to eliminate injustice and harm that possibly affect people because of traders' monopoly, it is a factor of the spread of need and hike in prices, and accordingly it leads to poverty.

Sixth, Reducing Consumption:

The Islamic Sharia urged people to eat, drink and make use of whatever benefits them, but without extravagance or wastefulness; because those are among the factors of recession and wasting money and wealth, and turn the rich into poor and the strong into weak.

Allah the Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an: "And eat and drink, but be not prodigal. Lo! He loves not the prodigals." [30] Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) also says in this regard: "Eat, drink, wear and give the poor due and be not prodigal or prideful." [31] He (PBUH) also says: "Nothing is filled by a man worse than his stomach, he eats to get strength, and if he has to eat, he should consider one third for his food, one third for his drink and one third for his breath." [32]

The Second Axis: Alleviating People's Sickness and disease

Islam has paid special attention to this issue through two methods:

The First Method: Is working to prevent diseases and epidemics and eliminate their spread; this is obvious in the narration by Usama ibn Zayd, quoting the Prophet (PBUH) as saying: "If you heard of the plague at a certain land, do not go there, and if it affected a land while you were there, do not leave it." [33]

The Second Method: Is to treat diseases:

Some Arabs asked the Prophet (PBUH) saying: "O Messenger of Allah, Don't we get remedy for diseases?" He (PBUH) answered: "Yes; O slaves of Allah, you should get remedy for diseases; Allah the Almighty has not created a disease without a remedy;" or he (PBUH) said in another narration: "A remedy for every disease except one." They asked: "What is it, O Messenger of Allah?" He (PBUH) said: "Aging." [34]

This tradition carries a call for remedy and research in the reasons of diseases and their treatment. It also carries a call for learning and practicing the profession of medicine to treat people. This is clear from his saying: "Allah the Almighty has not created a disease without a remedy."

Muslims gave special concern to health - whether of humans or animals - and many Muslim scientists wrote about medicine, physicians and hospitals. Ibn Khaldun wrote a chapter about the profession of medicine, and stressed how necessary this science is to benefit the human race.

The Caliphs of the Islamic State, especially the Caliphs of the First Abbasid State gave special care to physicians and had luxurious hospitals which were opened to the poor without any discrimination. When the establishment of Al Mansouri Hospital was finalised in Cairo, Sultan Al Mansour asked Qalawoun to bring him a glass of juice from the hospital, and he brought it to him; the Sultan drank it and said: "I grant this hospital to my peers, my followers, the rulers, the servants, the princes, the old and the young, the free people and slaves, men and women, all alike.

In this way, the role of the Abbasid State mentioned in Arab and Islamic history books was a great model for its concern and care of patients and the way it protected people against disease and epidemics.

Summarising Islam's stance on giving:

1. The obligation of states to ensure no citizen is deprived of essentials for a decent life and to act with compassion not only towards co-religionists and citizens, but also for the benefit of all humankind.
2. The obligation of encouraging and urging work, which is empowered by the establishment and improvement of agricultural projects and building new plants to employ the youth, not only through helping them by giving money, which forms a negative person, who can only extend his hand to ask for alms.
3. The obligation of fighting diseases:

First, as Islam paid special attention to the cleanliness and purification through cleanliness, launching awareness campaigns, taking all the necessary preventive measures and limit the spread of diseases and epidemics. Then, to create vaccinations that protect against all the diseases and epidemics expected to inflict the person to protect people against them.

Second, through making the state-run hospitals work under the comprehensive health insurance system, which put both the rich and the poor on the equal footing, and should have high-level medical services that satisfy the patients, not to be based on the principle of pay more to get better service, which enable only a limited segment of people (the rich) to get the proper medical service. This principle has turned the profession of medicine in our contemporary age into a commercial profession that does not consider the humanitarian side, except for certain exceptions.

And now for statistics that make for the authors of this proposal uncomfortable reading.

FACTS/STATISTICS

Poverty is the greatest scourge on the development of mankind as the following statistics illustrate:

The gap between haves and have-nots

- Approximately one billion people will still suffer from extreme poverty (living on less than US\$ 1.25 a day) in 2015 when the first phase of the Millennium Development project concludes. Although great progress has been made, “challenges, such as economic shocks, food insecurity and climate change threaten to undermine the progress made in recent years [1].
- Some 2.4 billion people lived on less than US\$ 2 a day in 2010, which is only a slight decline from 2.59 billion in 1981 [1].
- Almost half of the world’s wealth is now owned by just one percent of the population and seven out of ten people live in countries where economic inequality has increased in the last 30 years, which, according to the World Economic Forum is a major risk to human progress, impacting social stability within countries and threatening security on a global scale [2].
- The wealth of the one percent richest people in the world amounts to US\$ 110 trillion, which is 65 times the total wealth of the bottom half. [2].
- Some ten percent of the global population holds 86 percent of all the world’s assets, while the poorest 70 percent, comprising more than three billion adults, holds just three percent, according to Credit Suisse whose Wealth Report finds that global wealth has more than doubled since 2000 [3] but inequality remains high.
- Just 85 of the world’s richest people have as much wealth as the 3.5 billion poorest. [2]
- Seven-out-of-ten people live in countries where, over the last 30 years, economic inequality has increased. [2]

Tax Evasion/Avoidance

- At least US\$ 18.5 trillion have been stashed away in offshore tax havens around the world, away from the eyes of tax authorities, which represents a loss of more than US\$ 156 billion in revenue, according to figures published by Oxfam last year. This figure does not include major companies or corporations who find legal loopholes to dodge taxes. Oxfam’s Ken Roussel contends that a tax on those trillions would be enough to end extreme poverty worldwide twice over. [16]

Lack of potable water/sanitation

- 783 million people do not have access to clean water and almost 2.5 billion do not have access to adequate sanitation. [4]
- Approximately 66 percent of Africa is arid or semi-arid and more than 300 million live in a water-scarce environment (less than 1,000 m³ per capita. [4]

Lack of electricity

- Globally over 1.3 billion people – or 18 percent of the world’s population - are without access to electricity. More than 95 percent of these live in sub-Saharan Africa or in developing Asia. Around 84 percent of the electricity-deprived live in rural areas. [12]

Lack of food/nutrition

- 842 million people in the world do not have enough to eat. The vast majority live in developing countries where 14.3 percent of the population is undernourished. [5]
- The continent with the largest number of hungry people (over 500 million) is Asia, but Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest prevalence (24.8 percent of the population). [5]
- Poor nutrition causes 45 percent of deaths in children under five – 3.1 million children – annually. [5]
- One in four of the world’s children are stunted (short for their age) due to poor nutrition with 80 percent residing in 20 countries. [5] In some countries it is one-in-three (In India, 48 percent of children are stunted). [6]
- Every hour 300 children around the world die of malnutrition, while millions could be left with an I.Q. 15 percent below normal and could underperform at school. Save the Children predicts that malnourished children may, as adults, earn 20 percent less than their nourished peers, costing the global economy more than US\$100 billion a year. [6]
- One out of six infants is born with a low birth weight in developing countries. [10]

Lack of Education

- Primary school education remains inaccessible for 72 million of the world’s children, most living in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Only 10 percent of children attend primary school Somalia. In Mali, less than seven percent of children can read a word of connected text. In Afghanistan, seven million children are out of school and in rural areas 92 percent of girls do not receive an education. Some 8.2 million children in Nigeria, 6.8 million children in Pakistan, 4.4 million in the Democratic Republic of Congo and one million in Mozambique do not attend school. [7]
- 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty if all children left school with basic reading skills. [7]

- In Sub-Saharan Africa, providing every mother with secondary education would save the lives of 1.8 million children. [7]
- A billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or write their own names. [9]

Lack of health care

- Over a billion people (approx. 15 percent of the world's population) have some form of disability and between 110 million and 190 million adults have significant difficulties in functioning. Some 35 – 50 percent of people suffering from serious mental disorders in developed countries and between 76 – 85 percent in developing countries, receive no treatment. [8]
- In the poorest countries of the world there is only one doctor for 100,000 people. [11]
- Poor countries are losing health workers, many to HIV/AIDS but most migrate to wealthy countries seeking better pay and improved conditions. [11]
- There is a reemergence of infectious diseases, such as Anthrax, Anti-Microbial Resistance, Botulism, Campylobacteriosis, Coronaviruses, Dengue Fever, Ebola/Marburg, Ehrlichiosis, E. coli, Influenza, Group A Streptococcal infections, Hepatitis, Lyme disease, Plague, Prion Diseases, Salmonellosis, Shigellosis, Smallpox, Tuberculosis, Tularemia, West Nile Virus.[13]
- In 2011, 6.9 million children under five died, mostly from preventable diseases. [14] In 2012, about 2.9 million died during the neonatal period – the first month after birth accounting for 44 percent of deaths. Today, approximately 18,000 children die each day unnecessarily. [15]

Economic Migration

- Economic migrants are the fastest rising group of migrants. New patterns are emerging with countries that once sent migrants abroad, such as Argentina, Ireland and South Korea, now experiencing migrant inflows. People who migrate because they cannot make a living in their homelands often risk their lives crossing oceans and deserts and when they arrive they are treated as societal pariahs or locked up in camps. The key to this phenomenon, which is igniting racial hatreds in developed countries and bolstering far right-wing parties, is to aid development in the world's poorest countries so that citizens no longer feel obliged to leave.

Poverty's impact on Crime Rates

- There is no excuse for committing crimes but it is also true that desperate people whose basic needs are not being met are more susceptible to breaking the law. Economists, social scientists and legal experts have long debated this topic and remain in disagreement but a 2002 study by World Bank economists discovered that there is a causative correlation between inequality and crime rates, not only at the citizen level but also between countries. [17]

Global taxation to end poverty

The idea of global taxation is not new. There is a general acceptance that a poverty tax could end the suffering of a billion human beings, but as yet, there is no will on the part of governments to implement such a tax.

Indeed, in 2004, then Brazilian President Luiz Inacio “Lula” da Silva with the backing of the President of Chile and the French President Jacques Chirac launched a campaign to introduce international taxation to finance the UN Millennium Development Goals and put a report before the UN Millennium+5 Summit titled “Action against Hunger and Poverty”. The report argued that current sources of development finance are “inadequate and unpredictable”.

Ultimately, ‘the Lula Group’ was only able to persuade 66 countries to support a mere airline ticket tax. Reports issued by the European Union, the United Nations University, the World Institute for Development and Economics Research have concluded that global taxation is not only technically feasible, but desirable. President Barack Obama has advocated the introduction of a global poverty tax since 2007 and the United Nations has called for such a tax as recently as 2012.

The logical international organisation to spearhead and manage this project is the United Nations. But critics fear that the United Nations may become a vehicle for global governance or its policies are dominated by Western powers which provide substantial funding. The fact that the BRICS nations have just formed their own development bank rivaling the World Bank, which is a United Nations arm, illustrates this point. Some opponents to the idea of global taxation express concerns that generated revenue might be eroded by bureaucracy or end up in the pockets of authoritarian leaders and their cronies. Eliminating those real or imagined concerns requires a sea change in thinking if the international community is truly committed to ending extreme poverty rather than paying lip service or making pledges that regularly fail to manifest.

To allay those valid concerns, it is proposed that an entirely independent organisation be founded that is solely tasked with being the recipient of global taxes and responsible for their disbursement in coordination with, but not under the jurisdiction, of the United Nations and individual governments.

Preliminary methodology

- 1 The hosting of a conference in a neutral country such as Switzerland of world leaders, economists, representatives of philanthropic funds/trusts, registered charities, heads of non-governmental organisations (NGO) and all concerned with alleviating poverty to discuss the following agenda:
 - a) The urgency of eradicating extreme poverty in accordance with values and human rights.
 - b) Extreme poverty’s negative effects on economies, societal unrest, crime rates and its role as one of the main generators of mass economic migration.
 - c) The desirability of a unified global effort to eradicate extreme poverty with pledges by individual governments to donate two-and-a-half-percent of their tax revenues annually towards this goal.
 - d) Various methods of increasing revenue streams from taxation.
 - e) To discuss the viability of a new independent body headquartered in a neutral country with field offices in the capitals of participating nations tasked with receiving and disbursing said revenues.

- f) An invitation giving an option to philanthropic trusts, charitable foundations and billionaires to make similar pledges according to their own discretion/circumstances.
- 2 The launching of a Public Relations (PR) campaign (television public information advertisements, newspaper ads, columns, social media, benefit events, concerts) to galvanise public support.
- 3 The drafting of a Memorandum of Intent to be signed by heads of governments detailing their willingness to donate two-and-a-half percent of their annual taxation revenues to a new independent body tasked with eradicating extreme poverty. The revenue generated to be transferred to a new independent institution. This to be followed by heads of state signing a pledge and making financial contributions towards the establishment of an independent organisation.

Implementation

- 1 The setting-up of an independent organisation, hereinafter referred to as 'the Organisation' to be headquartered in a neutral country and tasked with pinpointing areas of dire need in coordination with (but not answerable to) United Nations organs, such as the WHO, UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, the IMF, as well as NGOs, charities and governments.
- 2 'The Organisation' will be the recipient of revenues generated by a global poverty tax and will be responsible for hastening the eradication of extreme poverty concurrently but separate from the organs of the United Nations currently implementing the eight Millennium Development goals.
- 3 'The Organisation' to be supervised by a comparatively small rotating committee or board made up of representatives of member states and chaired by a high profile individual with proven credentials in a philanthropic field over a term of no more than four years. No one country or geopolitical bloc should have a controlling stake. For this purpose the world should be divided up into zones i.e. North America and South America (two committee members), West and east Europe (two committee members), Asia (two committee members), Africa (two committee members), the Middle East/Gulf (two members) etc.
- 4 In all member countries and beneficiary countries will be 'The Organisation's' field offices concerned with coordinating with government departments, charitable institutions, educational institutions, agricultural cooperatives, hospitals and clinics etc. on worthwhile infrastructure projects, communal and individual recipients, to be helped with donations or interest-free loans. Such field offices are to be staffed by experts in various fields and researchers. The managers of such field offices will be responsible for reporting on feasibilities to 'The Organisation's' committee/board, which will sign-off on each initiative on a case-by-case basis following a majority vote.
- 5 'The Organisation' will be formed with strict checks and balances to avoid corruption or cronyism and will be independently audited annually to be conducted by two large reputable international auditing firms, such as KPMG and Ernest and Young.

Taxation

- A. Member countries will be required to donate two-and-a-half percent of their tax revenues - or a percentage to be agreed - to fund 'The Organisation'. Member countries will be urged to tighten up

rules/laws on tax evasion/avoidance and inflict heavy financial penalties on infringers to be channeled to 'The Organisation'.

- B. As mentioned above in the section headed Facts/Statistics, some US\$ 18.5 trillion has been hidden in tax havens, representing a taxation loss of more than US\$ 156 billion, according to Oxfam, which asserts that a tax on those trillions would be enough to end extreme poverty worldwide twice over.

Conclusion

Democracies in the developed world invariably tout their 'values' and 'human rights'. But those core staples of what it means to be human in the 21st century are not being translated into meaningful progress when an estimated one billion people will still be subsisting on less than US\$ 1.25 a day when the first phase of the Millennium Development Goals conclude in 2015. The poor deserve more than mere lip service to their plight. Moreover, a serious effort in lifting people out of poverty will serve to dampen public unrest, reduce crime, reduce economic migration - and will ultimately benefit the global economy by producing greater consumption and permitting individuals to contribute to society, instead of being left behind relying on hand-outs. You are, therefore, requested to give this proposal due attention with a view to working together in order to take this forward to fruition.

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