

Remedying the Scourge of Poverty as a Social Problem: The Islamic Perspective

Authors : Maryam Umar Ladan, Arshad Munir

Abstract : Poverty has always been a constant feature of society throughout history. It has existed in the lives of people and it is a fact that although the majority of people lives in poverty, the remaining minority lives in luxury. While some countries called the first World countries lives in luxury, the third World countries lives in poverty. It remains an undesirable phenomenon affecting a vast number of people across the globe despite governmental, institutional and private organizations' interventions with measures aimed at cushioning its adverse effects. Unequal distribution of societal resources, accumulated wealth in the hands of few, lack of access to education and employment, individual responsibility among others, were highlighted as factors associated with poverty. Poverty predisposes the poor individual to malnutrition and starvation, exposure to disease, thereby resulting to violence, crimes, and experiencing lifelong problems. Evidence show that about 50 percent of the world population lives on less than 2.50 dollar a day, 90 percent of whom are from Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia including countries where Islam is the major if not one adherent religion. As a solution to poverty, Islam prescribes a system of annual Zakat (charity). The Islamic law prescribes that every person who has a saving that reaches a certain limit should give out 2.5 percent of the total annual earning (as in income, money, farm produce) to deserving and prescribed citizens. This is to, among others; reduce the level of inequality through distribution of wealth among the Muslim Ummah (community). Furthermore, Islam encourages the rich in several places in the Qur'an to spend their wealth on poor people other than the compulsory 2.5%. Therefore, it is inarguable that the Islamic system of distribution of resources (as zakat) is the best strategy to poverty eradication. Thus, strongly recommended for desired results in poverty eradication efforts. If every rich person gives Zakat sincerely, poverty will be eradicated in the world, and not a single person will die of want of food or material things.

Keywords : Islam, charity, poverty, zakat

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