



\$2/DAY challenge

Global Peace and Security

Overview of the Issue

Imagine the amount of money you spent on the last seven pairs of shoes you bought. For about half of the world's population who live on \$2 a day or less, that amount of money is equivalent to one year's salary. For 53 countries, that same amount is greater than their average per capita annual income. This level of poverty has devastating effects for individual, national, and international security. Because of these effects, the challenge of eradicating global poverty is no longer only a moral and humanitarian concern. From the risks posed by the spread of infectious diseases to increased instances of conflict in poverty-stricken areas, the consequences of poverty must also be viewed as an issue of global peace and security.

Poverty and Global Peace and Security

In many countries, young people are coming of age in societies that are unstable, insecure, and impoverished. When young people are uprooted, jobless, and have few positive opportunities to contribute to society, they represent a ready pool of recruits for violent groups. Young people are also victimized by widespread violence. Poverty itself is one explanation for why young people join violent organizations. For example studies in the Balkans show that the chance to earn an income through looting and smuggling was often a more important motivation for the young men who joined militia groups than appeals to ethnic solidarity. Creating opportunities for young men and women to thrive economically, politically, and socially will in and of itself, deter terrorism.

Poverty and Human Insecurity Around the World: Afghanistan

- Health care: Health facilities are disproportionately located in urban areas depriving the 75% of the population that live in rural areas, most of which are poor, access to basic health services, such as treatment for common illnesses or diseases and prenatal care.
- Education: While 3.7 million children were enrolled in grades 1-12 in 2002, large disparities existed between urban and rural areas in access to education. For instance, nearly half of Afghanistan's teachers and schools were located within 5 major cities.
- Access to clean water: Only 2% of the rural population had access to piped water in 2003. Additionally, 61.7% of the population drank unsafe water.

The economic desperation and human insecurity of living on less than \$2 a day can serve as a source of frustration, resentment, and hopelessness. These feelings can lead to significant consequences for national and international security. While poverty does not directly lead to terrorism nor are all terrorists poor, the feelings derived from poverty can create the conditions necessary for terrorist leaders to gain support and legitimize their actions at home and abroad. While the consequences from terrorism are tragic and debilitating in any region, evidence suggests terrorist activity is more prevalent and directly affects poorer regions of the world more than rich areas. For example, the total number of deaths from terrorism between 1998 and 2004 in Asia and Africa reached about 28,000 people compared to 5,000 deaths in North America and Western Europe.

Poverty and Terrorism Around the World: Mali

- 72.1% of population lives on less than \$2 a day.

- A combination of poor security services, vast uninhabited areas, and widespread poverty have made it increasingly difficult for the Malian government to protect its nation's borders against foreign terrorist organizations.
- As a result, an al-Qaeda linked terrorist organization, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), is known to be active in Mali.
- Weak border security enables the GSPC to smuggle drugs in and out of Mali to fund its terrorist operations.

Poverty can also create conditions at the national level, such as weak governmental institutions and a weak rule of law, that pose serious security threats to both surrounding regions and the global community. Lawless nations and regions can serve as safe havens for terrorist organizations. Additionally, poor nations with ineffective governmental institutions have difficulty containing conflicts. These local conflicts may spill over into neighboring countries and create regional instability. Consequently, foreign governments may be less likely to invest resources and money in these areas, further hindering opportunities for development in poor countries.

The consequences of weak governance, lawlessness, and poverty in a nation have significant ramifications for international security. Even among poor countries, research suggests that a country with a GDP averaging \$250 per capita per year will have a 15% greater chance of internal conflict over the course of five years than a country with a per capita GDP of \$5000 per year, which has less than a 1% chance of internal conflict occurring. If these conflicts spillover into other regions, they may ultimately cost hundreds of thousands of lives, require costly international peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention, and create regional insecurity that hinders economic, political, and social development. It is estimated that 500 million of the world's poorest people live in weak nations.

Poverty also affects post-war reconstruction. Many low-income countries that have suffered from civil strife have very little to spend on post-conflict reconstruction. Yet the needs are great, particularly for youth. Many young people were either child soldiers, victims of the conflict, or lost family members during the conflict. Following conflict, young people need education, jobs, and security. Programs should also address the psycho-social stress that young people may experience both during and after a conflict ends. Unfortunately, countries emerging from conflict rarely have the ability to fund holistic rehabilitation and reintegration efforts, thereby missing an opportunity to reduce ethnic tensions, channel young people's energy productively, or encourage innovative thinking in post-conflict reconstruction. Many youth move from being child soldiers to unemployed and living in poverty.

Maintaining global peace and security demands attention be given to the billions suffering from poverty. Investing in education and development is an investment in peace and security. Ensuring the human security of all individuals throughout the world and to create stronger national governing institutions is an investment in global peace and security. Helping end global poverty is not only in the interest of nearly half the world's population, but it is in the interest of all individuals who seek to live in a more safe and peaceful world.

Solutions

- Increase development assistance for low-income countries to curb the potential for terrorism.
- Increase funding for holistic conflict-reconstruction programs, particularly youth reintegration, education, and employment.
- Increase young people's consultation on development programs and projects.

Take Action

1. Raise awareness about this issue by participating in AID's \$2 a day challenge.
2. Get your Member of Congress to take part in the \$2 a Day Challenge.

Raise awareness of poverty and conflict-related issues and how U.S. youth can promote responsible U.S. leadership on these issues. Go to for information on how AID could provide your campus with a mini-grant to host a conference or film screening.

For more information contact Vicente Garcia at vicente@aidemocracy.org

The \$2 a Day Challenge is an innovative new campaign from Americans for Informed Democracy (AID) to raise awareness about global poverty and to raise funds to support small, locally-run organizations in low-income countries who are doing great work improving incomes, combating disease, protecting the environment and promoting peace. For more information, go to: www.aidemocracy.org



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