

# Chapter 1

## **POOR AND MATERIALLY DEPRIVED PEOPLE: ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IN ITALY<sup>1</sup>**

**Gabriella D'AMBROSIO<sup>2</sup>**  
**Marco PALMIERI<sup>3</sup>**

### **FOREWORD**

On the occasion of World Economic Forum Annual Meeting which took place in Davos-Klosters (Switzerland) from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2019, Oxfam International published the report entitled “Public good or private wealth?” which stresses how the persistent gap between rich and poor undermines progress in fighting poverty, harms our economies and feeds social rage throughout the world. Indeed, as stated in the report, «our economy is broken, with hundreds of millions of people living in extreme poverty while huge rewards go to those at the very top. The number of billionaires has doubled since the financial crisis and their fortunes grow by \$2.5 billion a day, yet the super-rich and corporations are paying lower rates of tax than they have in decades. The human costs - children without teachers, clinics without medicines - are huge. Piecemeal private services punish poor people and privilege elites» (Oxfam International, 2019: 2).

More in detail and observing the data, we see that, on one side, the wealth of the world's billionaires increased \$900 billion during the last year, on the other 3.4 billion people, which are mainly in Sub-Saharan Africa and represent almost half of humanity, live on less than \$5.50 per day. These numbers are definitely impressive specially if we consider, as Oxfam International emphasizes, that getting the richest 1% to pay just 0.5% extra tax on their wealth would raise more money than it would cost to educate all the 262 million children out of school and provide healthcare that would save the lives of 3.3 million people. Moreover, education and health are two fundamental aspects of our society; as emerged from a recent study of 13 developing countries (Bambra et al., 2009), spending on education and/or health accounts for 69% of the total reduction of social inequality.

<sup>1</sup> The paragraph “Foreword” and the paragraph “Poverty in Europe: an overview” are written by Gabriella D’Ambrosio; the paragraph “Poverty dynamics in Italy: a case study” and the paragraph “Conclusion” are written by Marco Palmieri.

<sup>2</sup> PhD, Sapienza University of Rome, [gabriella.dambrosio@uniroma1.it](mailto:gabriella.dambrosio@uniroma1.it)

<sup>3</sup> Post Doc, Sapienza University of Rome, [marco.palmieri@uniroma1.it](mailto:marco.palmieri@uniroma1.it)

building the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations;  
providing adequate and predictable means for developing countries;  
supporting accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions.

So, what is the situation right now?

In the last progress report edited by United Nations in 2019, it is stated that the decline of extreme global poverty continues but slowly: this indicates that «the world is not on track to achieving the target of ending poverty by 2030. Extreme poverty today is concentrated and overwhelmingly affects rural populations. Increasingly, it is exacerbated by violent conflicts and climate change. Tackling the remaining pockets of extreme poverty will be challenging due to their persistence and complexity - often involving the interplay of social, political and economic factors» (United Nations, 2019: 22).

And in Italy? Is the economic condition improving?

Unfortunately, the recent update by the National Institute for Statistics (2019) states that the values are stable both for absolute and relative poverty (in 2018, over 1.8 million households lived in absolute poverty, for a total of just over 5 million); the number of households in relative poverty was just over 3 million, almost 9 million individuals.

In conclusion, the road to defeat poverty is still long: so, fighting poverty, as stated by Aneel Karnani (2011), is essential both to reduce wars and/or terrorism and to improve global prosperity. Moreover, as rightly pointed out by the United Nation in the last report published (2019), a really effective social protection schemes and government spending on key services «can help those left behind get back on their feet and find a way out of poverty» (United Nations, 2019: 22).

## REFERENCES

1. Atkinson, A.B., Bourguignon, F. (2015). *Handbook of Income Distribution*. Oxford: North-Holland.
2. Bambra, C., Pope, D., Swami, V., Stanistreet, D., Roskam, A., Kunst, A., Scott-Samuel, A. (2009). Gender, Health Inequalities and Welfare State Regimes: A Cross-National Study of 13 European Countries. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*. 63(1), 38-44.
3. Bossert, W., Chakravarty S.R., D'Ambrosio, C. (2012). Poverty and Time. *The Journal of Economic Inequality*. 10(2), 145-162.
4. Burchardt, T., Le Grand J., Piachaud D. (1999). Social Exclusion in Britain 1991- 1995. *Social Policy and Administration*. 33(3), 227-244.
5. European Commission (2019). *People at risk of poverty or social exclusion*. Retrieved from: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People\\_at\\_risk\\_of\\_poverty\\_or\\_social\\_exclusion](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion) [Online Resource].
6. Karnani, A. (2011). *Fighting Poverty Together. Rethinking Strategies for Business, Governments, and Civil Society to Reduce Poverty*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
7. Molina, A.H. (2008). *Towards an Inclusive Knowledge Society in Italy. Report 2008 - 1st volume*.

- Roma: Fondazione Mondo Digitale.
8. National Institute for Statistics (2008). *La povertà relativa in Italia nel 2007*. Retrieved from: <https://www.istat.it/it/files//2011/03/poverta07.pdf> [Online Resource].
  9. National Institute for Statistics (2009). *La povertà assoluta in Italia nel 2007*. Retrieved from: [http://www.astrid-online.it/static/upload/protected/ISTA/ISTAT-Povert--assoluta\\_Italia-2007.pdf](http://www.astrid-online.it/static/upload/protected/ISTA/ISTAT-Povert--assoluta_Italia-2007.pdf) [Online Resource].
  10. National Institute for Statistics (2018). *Poverty in Italy 2017*. Retrieved from: [https://www.istat.it/it/files//2018/06/Poverty-in-Italy\\_2017.pdf](https://www.istat.it/it/files//2018/06/Poverty-in-Italy_2017.pdf) [Online Resource].
  11. National Institute for Statistics (2019). *Poverty in Italy. Year 2018*. Retrieved from: [https://www.istat.it/it/files//2019/07/Povert%C3%A0\\_2018\\_EN.pdf](https://www.istat.it/it/files//2019/07/Povert%C3%A0_2018_EN.pdf) [Online Resource].
  12. Oxfam International (2019). *Public good or private wealth?*. Oxford: Oxfam GB.
  13. Petmesidou, M., Papatheodorou, C. (2013). *Poverty & Social Deprivation in the Mediterranean. Trends, Policies & Welfare Prospects in the New Millennium*. New York: Zed Books Ltd.
  14. Room G. (1990). *'New Poverty' in the European Community*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
  15. Roser, M., Ortiz-Ospina, E. (2013). *Global Extreme Poverty*. Published online at OurWorldIn-Data.org. Retrieved from: <https://ourworldindata.org/extreme-poverty> [Online Resource]
  16. Sumner, A. (2016). *Global Poverty. Deprivation, Distribution, and Development since the Cold War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
  17. The World Bank - The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (2002). *A World Bank Policy Research Report. Globalization, Growth, and Poverty. Building an Inclusive World Economy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
  18. United Nations (2000). *United Nations Millennium Declaration*. Retrieved from: <https://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf> [Online Resource].
  19. United Nations (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Retrieved from: [https://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E) [Online Resource].
  20. United Nations (2019). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019*. Retrieved from: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2019.pdf> [Online Resource].