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The effects of poverty on Society

One of the greatest plights of the impoverished is their image. Being poor is not pretty, passers by often assume the worst; that the poor are lazy bums who choose their way of life over that of a productive middle class citizen. While a good portion of the beggars working financial districts of affluent cities may be playing the system, as a whole the impoverished are usually victims of cyclical poverty traps. More often than not, in order to transition from rags to riches the poor need a hand from more privileged members of society. In actuality, according to the WHO, the world produces enough food, shelter and medicine to provide for every human being on earth as of 2014 (poverties.org). The only reason the poor are poor is circumstance, there is most certainly enough to go around. What it all boils down to is a lack of empathy on the part of the upper classes, based on false preconceived notions about how and why the poor become poor. While the falsehoods propagated around poverty may persist and alive the moral quandary associated with poverty, the social, political, and economic ramifications of poverty must still be addressed.

When we hear the word poverty we picture suffering, from the slums of India to the harsh African dessert even to the streets of Trenton; we envision the individuals who endure sub standard lives in squalor. This image, however, depicts and incomplete portrayal of the whole picture which surprisingly includes all of us. Poverty has a long list of consequences to the middle and upper classes that are not quite obvious in nature. These effects include the spread of disease, tax burdens and conflict among other more obvious side-effects. The most apparent consequence of society is crime. Areas plagued by intense poverty are often accompanied by higher rates of nonviolent property related crime(ex stealing food) where as areas where there is a stark contrast in income inequality are subject to crimes of social tension. Theses crimes are best evidenced by the recent “Ferguson riots” where a low-income black community rioted and looted their town in response to the shooting of an unarmed black man by a white police officer. This incident sparked a phenomenon of nationwide rioting and looting in neighborhoods of low socio-economic standing. While the epicenter of this pandemic was mostly racial in nature, it turned into a divide between socioeconomic classes. This instability caused by the suffering and perceived injustice society exacts on the poor has the capacity to destabilize entire nations. In the middle east, a phenomenon known as the Arab Spring emerged in 2010 starting with the outing of longtime [President](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_Tunisia) [Zine El Abidine Ben Ali](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zine_El_Abidine_Ben_Ali) from Tunisia that has swept across six countries and counting wreaking political, economic and social havoc in the process. These conflicts mostly arose from the outrage of the impoverished.

National destabilization might be a dramatic and widely publicized result of poverty but the most costly events often fall under the media’s radar. For example, Ethiopia has been experiencing reduced rainfall each year for the last decade or so, this scarcity of resources has led to local conflicts. Water scarcity has cost Ethiopia dearly where the main source of water is deep dug wells which have had to be dug as deep as 100 feet as of late. Some Ethiopian tribes have lost as much as 80% of their live stalk in dehydration. This desperation has led to conflicts like the Guii invasion of Borenan land resulting in hundreds of deaths and 23,000 refugees all in pursuit of water bearing land.