Unit 1: Thinking about poverty

Focus Question: What do you know about poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand?

Teacher Notes

Worksheet: Notions of Poverty
On the worksheet are some discussion starters about different notions of poverty. Organise the class into groups of four, distribute copies of the worksheet ‘Notions of Poverty’, and allocate one quote to each group.

Ask students to talk about their quote and work out what the speaker might be thinking of people who are poor i.e. their underlying attitude or assumptions.

Groups use the Placemat Round Robin technique (see below) to organise their thinking and help with reporting back.

Placemat Round Robin
This is designed to allow for individual thinking, and for each voice to be heard and recognised and all ideas explored.

- Students seated in groups of four around a piece of A3 paper.
- With a marker pen ask one person to draw the following diagram on the paper.

- The outer spaces are for each person to write their thoughts about the quote.
- The ellipse in the middle is for one person to write down the common points or negotiated meaning eg ‘Our quote is about people who think that poverty is . . .’
- Each group reports the common points to the whole class.
- Write up a list of each group’s suggestions on the board.
- Work through the list of underlying attitudes (as below). Can the students see any matches between the two lists?
Underlying attitudes/thinking related to the comments on the worksheet Notions of Poverty:

1. Poverty is not helping yourself.
2. Poverty is missing out.
3. Poverty is being born into the wrong place at the wrong time.
4. Money is power. People are rich at the expense of others.
5. Poverty is the consequence of injustice.
6. Everyone here has equal opportunities. It’s about making the best choices.

Conclude with focusing on the Catholic social teaching principles of:

- Human Dignity
- Respect for Human Life
- Preferential Protection for the Poor

What do these principles teach us about the poor?

See also the full reference on Catholic social teaching for students in Teacher Information.

Thinking about poverty

Caritas social justice booklet No. 13 Look and look again provides a strong base of evidence for background knowledge on this theme. One is in your school pack. You can order more booklets or you can download a copy from the Caritas website: www.caritas.org.nz.

Other material for background reading can be located in Websites in the Resources section.

Small group discussion

Read through the list of questions below. Select some priority questions that student groups could discuss.

1. How do you define poverty and wealth?
2. Is the problem of inequality in the world (as a concentration of wealth and resources) getting better or worse? How can this be measured?
3. Is there poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand? If so, how is it different from poverty in, say, India?
4. How are people who are rich and who are poor interconnected? What are the consequences of poverty for rich people? What are the consequences for poor people of a high concentration of wealth in a few hands?
5. How has wealth been generated and maintained in the world, and in this country? How has poverty been generated and maintained in the world, and in this country?
“It’s a really hard night’s sleep. It’s normal, it’s better than listening to my parents fighting and drinking all the time…I’m hungry, I’m cold and I don’t want to go home. No use going home to no food in the cupboards. I’m alright here!!”
Mere, Paeroa

Source: Office of the Children’s Commissioner – from the project This is how I see it: Children and young people’s views and experiences of poverty.

Worksheet: Wants and Needs
Thinking through the difference between wants and needs. Ask the students to consider the scenario and to discern the difference between what the boy pictured would like and what he really needs.

Worksheet: What do you need in your room?
After reading a short story, students make decisions about what they would need to make their basic room better. Choices need to be made within a small budget.
Notions of poverty

Some people say . . .

1. ‘We have poor people because they aren’t working hard enough.’

2. ‘People are poor if they haven’t got things like Play Stations and they only have one pair of shoes.’

3. ‘People are poor because their family have always been poor.’

4. ‘You’re poor because you have to work for low wages. The boss gets rich.’

5. ‘We have poor people because people don’t share, and people treat each other unfairly.’

6. ‘Anything is possible, so you’re poor because you haven’t made the most of your chances/choices.’
Wants and Needs

Look at the picture on the Worksheet – What Sam would like to have. It shows stuff that Sam considers important in his life.

Now try to imagine what it must be like when you have no money to spend on things you want, and only enough money to buy things you really need.

Look again at the picture and decide what Sam really does need.

List the five things you would retain in the thought bubble and say why they are needs and not wants, for instance: ‘Water bottle because we need water to stay alive and well’.

1. .................................................................

2. .................................................................

3. .................................................................

4. .................................................................

5. .................................................................
What Sam would like to have
Yared Kebede is from Ethiopia. He is a Year 10 student at St Patrick’s College in Kilbirnie, Wellington. He came to New Zealand in December 2006 with two sisters. They came here as refugees to live with their older sister who had arrived in New Zealand from Ethiopia a few years earlier. This sister was taking on the responsibility of caring for the whole family because neither of Yared’s parents was alive.

Yared’s sister rents a three-bedroom house from Housing New Zealand. When Yared first arrived he was able to share a room with a little brother, but now there are nine members of the family living in this three-bedroom house. Yared and his 13 year old brother don’t have a proper bedroom and sleep in a place near the kitchen.

Before he came here Yared imagined this country to be cold, filled with white faces, and with people living in big houses. The reality is different. While our weather is still cold compared with Ethiopia, Yared can see that not everyone has white skin and not everyone has a really big house. Or even a medium-size house.

Yared’s sister works as a taxi driver which helps pay for the basic things the family need. They have hopes that Housing New Zealand will one day give approval for them to shift into a bigger house.

On the next page is a diagram of a basic bedroom similar to the one Yared first shared with his little brother. This room has:

1. electric light in the middle of the ceiling
2. curtains that cover the window when pulled together
3. mat
4. 2 single beds with sheets, 1 pillow and 2 blankets
5. large storage chest

On this diagram draw in other things you consider **basic which you would need** so you could share this bedroom with your brother or sister. (Do not include clothes or shoes.)

Before you get carried away … you have only $50 to spend on making this room meet all your needs.

Give reasons for your choices. For example:

- a beanbag so I can relax, $20 second hand
- a bed light because I need decent light to read, $8 from op shop, including bulb
My basic room

- 1 bed
- 2 blankets
- 2 sheets
- Pillow
- Ceiling light
- Storage box
- Curtain
- Window
- Door
I need these things and they probably would cost me …

Without these things I …