

## Poverty Reduction Policy in the University of Baghdad

Every society seeks to achieve sustainable development through the advancement of material and human aspects. This step requires fighting poverty and alleviating its severity by improving the social, economic and political conditions of the society. It also demands creating many opportunities for individuals, especially university students. The latter step in return requires to focus on activating the process of participation by members of the society in general and the university in particular in the development process, and to make decisions that affect their lives through activating the empowerment strategy that helps build human capacities.

### 1. The Concept of Poverty

The United Nations Development Department determined that a person is poor only if his income is below the specified poverty line. It further defines the poverty line as having enough income to buy a certain amount of food. Therefore, poverty means that opportunities and choices for human development do not exist, and that these opportunities and choices mean a long healthy life to enjoy a high standard of living, freedom, dignity and respect for oneself and others. The importance of defining the concept of poverty helps in defining its causes and policies to reduce it, empower the poor, and define the nature of the programs and the beneficiaries thereof.

### 2. Entries Related to the Concept of Poverty:

- a. Income Entry: A person is considered poor if his income is below the specified poverty line.
- b. Basic Needs Entry: Poverty means the deprivation of the requirements necessary to meet the minimum acceptable level of basic needs to live in dignity (food, housing and clothing) in addition to other needs, such as education and health.
- c. Capacity Entry: Poverty here represents a person's lack of the basic capabilities that enable him to perform at his acceptable minimum levels to obtain adequate food and shelter.

Based on the foregoing, any strategic plan should seek to provide the basic ingredients for achieving comprehensive social development that will improve the standard of living of citizens, including students and university employees. Such a step is met by providing educational, health, cultural and other social services to ensure a steady improvement in the quality of life, and within the framework of social parity, achieving the desired equality between the spectrum of society.

The step also entails motivating civil society organizations and the private sector to actively participate in the provision of social services in solidarity and integration with the university as development partners. Such an integration is done according to the new social contract system that enhances the concept of community participation in development efforts with its economic, social and environmental dimensions alike. Achieving this requires taking into account the existing internal disparity, whether at the level of social groups or geographical areas. This is because reducing the problem of poverty constitutes a basic pillar of the development plan.

### 3. The Proposed Policies

Poverty alleviation requires the following policies:

- A. Direct Income Enhancement Policy:** It depends on granting subsidies and direct cash advances to beneficiaries, a process which is determined by committees and updated periodically.
- B. The Policy of Satisfying the Basic Needs:** It relies on postulates, such as: the diminishing opportunity for the poor to benefit from development revenues, the failure to reach these groups, and the poor group's lack of political and social power. This policy aims to satisfy the basic needs.
- C. Individual and Collective Self-Reliance Policy:** The general basis of this policy is to enable students and affiliates to work and develop their incomes

individually or within groups and teams. It also stokes their motivation to work on improving their conditions, and provides them with the expertise and technical skills necessary to motivate them to work, innovate, and develop their ambition.

#### **4. Requirements for Developing Anti-Poverty Policies**

The formulation and implementation of policies requires the following assumptions:

- a) Availability of will and commitment to poverty alleviation.
- b) Availability of financial and material resources necessary for implementation.
- c) There is support at the level of the university, the ministry and the community.
- d) Effective coordination with civil society organizations and the private sector.
- e) Formation of a permanent committee for implementation at the university level and sub-committees at the level of colleges and centers.
- f) Determining the beneficiaries of students and associates at the university and updating that periodically.
- g) Maintaining gender equality in care and risk reduction.

#### **5. Proposed Programs for Implementing Policies**

##### **A. Establishing a Social Development Fund to reduce poverty and achieve social justice.**

The fund aims to confront the problem of poverty through direct means (increasing the income of the student or associate) or indirectly through the development of human resources (improving skills and gaining experience for students and associates), including:

- 1) The Fund shall grant subsidies and advances to the beneficiaries of the program with monthly or seasonal payments.
- 2) Financing small and micro entrepreneurial projects, such as sewing and embroidery workshops and fast food kiosks, which achieves:
  - Providing new job opportunities through owning or working on these projects.
  - Increasing the income through these projects or through the wages of work in these projects. Wages escalate whenever the student or affiliate showed efficiency in performance.
  - Providing a wide variety of goods and services suitable for the poor in terms of price and quality.
- 3) Financing the implementation of development and empowerment programs, including:
  - Programs that spread the idea of self-employment to develop the thought, culture and skills of self-employment for students and associates.
  - Empowerment through training and rehabilitation (how to start a small project/ how to develop a small project) (in cooperation with continuing education centers and training and rehabilitation units).
  - Training for the purpose of employment, which is financing and implementing training programs linked to a real confirmed work opportunity (in cooperation with the private sector).
  - Social protection for the poor and effective response to emergencies by the university and college.
  - Focusing on building capabilities, skills, experiences and how to respond to a challenging environment.
  - Focusing on providing temporary job opportunities at the university (during the summer vacation, for example) and according to the actual needs to perform specific work with remunerative wages.
  - Adding a clause in the contracts done by the university with the beneficiaries of the stakeholders, including the operators of restaurants and cafeterias, stipulating that an acceptable and specific percentage of students wishing to increase their living income during study should be employed on a part-time basis and with remunerative wages.
  - The university provides health care for students benefiting from the poverty reduction program through a special card to consult its educational hospitals free of charge for him and his family

members if it is for consulting matters, or at nominal prices if it is for an operation or surgical intervention.

- Providing students with credit cards with specific use and a specific balance for the purpose of purchasing food and clothes for work at the university.
- Exploiting the abandoned and unused spaces in the university and within the Faculties of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine to invest these areas as agricultural associations and as areas for raising cows, poultry and beehives, provided that students and associates work in them following work schedules that do not affect their scientific and functional obligations.
- Nominating some students to work as tourist guides for tourists on holidays and outside the hours of academic and professional commitment.
- Designing programs for beneficiaries in exchange for fees paid to them.
- Exploiting artistic units, especially in the Academy of Fine Arts, to display and market the artistic productions of students and associates, after setting up a mechanism to be agreed upon.
- Employing the beneficiaries in some laboratories and clinics outside the times of their scientific and functional commitment.