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The Most Underserved Populations: How Rich and Poor Orphans Rise Together

Abstract

Our world has become starkly inequitable with 0.01% of the population owning 11% of all wealth, 1% owning 38% of all wealth, 10% owning 76% of all wealth, and the lower 50% owning almost nothing. Amongst all of these, there is a group of the most vulnerable, the most underserved, and ironically the most silent because, for the most part, they cannot speak for themselves: orphans, most of whom are in the lower 61%. The world population of orphans today is approximately 153 million. Selfishness and indifference have brought us to an appalling point in human history, but a radical change could be made, starting with the orphan population, if the world's middle class and above would adopt them in some way. The purpose of this paper is to explore the feasibility of such a social action and demonstrate the viability and potentially rapid effectiveness of this positive social engineering. The subject area is social and emotional learning, social responsibility, social entrepreneurship, and global citizenship. One of the groups in question is underserved and one is overserved yet underserved in that it lacks real happiness, in effect, both orphans. Through the lens of social constructivism, we examine the feasibility of projects through which the overserved help the underserved and both find fulfillment. Quantitative facts highlight the possibilities for radically ameliorating the orphan problem and qualitative investigation can measure the ensuing fulfillment of these groups. The final significant implication is that the orphan problem could be solved in this generation.

Keywords: underserved, orphans, indifference, middle class, social-emotional learning, social responsibility, social entrepreneurship, global citizenship

Introduction: Underserved population

Our world has become starkly inequitable with 0.01% of the population owning 11% of all wealth, 1% owning 38% of all wealth, 10% owning 76% of all wealth, and the lower 50% owning almost nothing (The Hill, 2021; Business Insider, 2021). Another viewpoint from which to see the disparity is that there is a high-income class of 7%, an upper middle-income class of 15%, a middle-income class of 17%, a lower income class of 51%, and a class considered in extreme poverty of nearly 10% (World Vision, 2022). By all definitions, more than half of our world is underserved. Cornell University law school defines the underserved as populations who meet challenges in accessing victim services because of geographic location, religion, gender, ethnicity, age, disabilities, special needs, and more (Cornell Law School, 2022). The United Nations SDG list outlines the type of services that are inequitably provided, as well as who the underserved are (UN Stats, 2018). Amongst all of these, there is a group of the most vulnerable, the most underserved, the most helpless and defenseless, and

ironically the most silent because, for the most part, they cannot speak for themselves: orphans, most of whom are in the lower 61%. The world population of orphans today is approximately 153 million (SOS Children's Villages, 2022). Contemplating this problem in the light of how beliefs can impact the teaching and learning of an underserved population, we must consider the duality of the problem. The orphans have an obvious need and problem, yet simultaneously, those who could bring a solution to the orphans' problem may be affected by their own need and problem, a certain learning disability, symptomatic of autism, yet also of psychopathy (Jones et al., 2010). To explain, those who could solve the problem might possibly not care enough to sense the urgency to solve it and believe that it is not their responsibility but someone else's or believe that the problem is unsolvable since it has always been there and no one has totally solved it before, therefore it is unrealistic to strive for a total solution and we must tolerate it.

This disability is manifested by convenient self-centeredness coupled with temporary but unstable happiness (Dambrun, 2017) compounded with a fatalistic attitude (Levin, et.al., 2021). The latter group referred to is the upper 41% of the socio-economic spectrum, who, if it is possible to help them learn to not tolerate the situation and learn to give of themselves sufficiently, could adopt the orphans. 153 million orphans are too many for any one or few nations to absorb and care for institutionally, but by dividing the load among many capable families, it is quite possible. It would depend upon the charity of that many families. Is humanity capable of such a selfless act? Selfishness and indifference have brought us to an appalling point in human history, in which more than half the world suffers need, while the other less-than-half continues to grow in wealth, even allowing 17.5% of all children to live in extreme poverty (World Bank, 2020) and 6.5% to be orphans, but a radical change could be made, starting with the orphan population first, if the world's middle class and above would adopt them in some way. The purpose of this paper is to explore the feasibility of such a social action and demonstrate the viability and potentially rapid effectiveness of this positive social engineering.

Audience and rationale

The target audience in this example is tandem, matching the other components. On the one hand, the lower and extreme poverty class, and on the other hand the middle and above class. The lesson for the middle and above class is to share their wealth, and it must be said, wisely, so that efforts are sustainable. The lesson for the lower and poverty classes is to use well the opportunity by taking good care of resources, working, and studying to become self-sustaining and be transparent about costs and expenses because there are sometimes abuses in this sense which turn donors away. The class size on the giving side could be a classroom of participating students at a school, a group of friends on a social network, a church congregation, a club, a neighborhood, a town, or even a city, state, or country, depending on the type of outreach used. In our current situation, we use all of these. On the receiving side, size could be a family, community, orphanage, school, village, or national project, also depending on the opportunity available. Our charity projects also span the range from individual families to nationwide projects. Age range can be all ages since we can learn to give and care at any age, and we never finish learning and practicing the subject. We have projects K-12, university, for parents, teachers, business sector, and government. These all overlap and intersect, but the materials and activities are age appropriate. The

subject area is social and emotional learning, social responsibility, social entrepreneurship, and global citizenship. The demographics are varied on both sides, including several ethnicities, religions, and socioeconomic classes. In our current example model, we include special needs learners on the giving side, including PTSD recoveries, Asperger syndrome (semi-autistic) helpers, ELL students, and a semi-disabled previously homeless gentleman, all of whom work together as a team. On the receiving side, our orphanage team is frequently sick or injured, but nothing permanent. Our teams in Kenya, Congo, and other diverse locations are also quite varied.

The underserved population within the audience is the world's orphan population, using as an example our current model of the children and director of a Ugandan orphanage, as well as very low-income school children with families, and young village girl entrepreneurs served in our Kenya projects. There are also families who have lost many of their members to violent terrorism in Eastern Congo along with ex-child soldiers, and Syrian refugee children in camps and medical homes at the borders of Syria. The definition of orphan, according to the literature at present is broad, applying to a child without parents, with one parent, with parents incapable of caring for the child, an abused child, or a refugee who cannot return to his family for safety's sake, possibly temporarily. In all cases, the child needs care, but this could be through and together with his relatives, one of the parents, or even the community where the child lives (Brandeis University, 2011). This broadens the scope of how to "adopt" a child from only physically and individually adopting inter-country to helping to support both the child and family or caretakers involved where they are in their native country, which could be more what the child needs. In all cases, the primary consideration must be, "What is best for the child?"

Besides this, longitudinal research studies have shown that institutionalized orphan care does not provide the same nurturing effect as a child's own parent, even if only one, a family relative, or adoptive family care. Education is only one aspect of their need, intertwined with the need for food, shelter, and the warmth of a family. Using this informed logic as a guideline, we can deduce that 153 million orphans are underserved because they are still orphans in some way, even within the broader scope of the definition, and being an orphan implies that they are in some way missing what others have besides the already heavy burden of living in extreme poverty or low income. When they become adequately cared for they stop being orphans. If each family of the upper 39% of the world population was to adopt one orphan or orphan with accompanying caretakers, the problem would be quickly solved. The current world population is calculated at 7.96 billion, 39% of which equals 3.1 billion. The average family size in the U.S. and Europe is 3.3 and 3.1 per home respectively, with Australia at 2.53. India's growing middle class (28%) with an average family size of 4.8 brings the average up to 4 (Pew Research, 2020; Statista, 2022), so we can approximate 775 million families, middle class and above in the world. If each of these families adopted one orphan, the problem would be solved five times over.

As the audience is dual, so the underserved population is dual along with the solution to the problem: those in need of help and those in need of being willing to give the help. These two groups are ironically intertwined, a pair of quarks on distant sides of a universe, mysteriously entangled, affecting the movement or resistance to movement of one another. In the case of our rescue group, those who could solve the problem if they choose to; are also affected by their circumstance of wealth because by denying access to their lives of relative abundance, and for some, excess, they are

isolating themselves from the rest of the human family, closing their eyes to a need which could be solved by them. The same psychiatrist, cited in the introduction of this paper, who diagnosed self-centeredness and its temporary unstable happiness followed by depression contrasts it with selflessness and the accompanying stable and enduring happiness it engenders (Dambrun, 2017). In a way, both groups are orphans, one not by choice, and the other by choice, yet put to a test, a chance for freedom if it will venture out of the self-imposed gilded cage of materialism. This background to the twin-problem conundrum can shine a light on what the solution could be, which also is dual in this Rubik's-cube-type challenge. By moving one part, the next part can move, part by part, until all the squares are in place. One of the groups in question is underserved and one is overserved yet underserved in that it lacks real happiness. My instruction to this dual group would not be so much with words, but through the experience of fulfilling each other's needs, the true social constructivism of learning together to give and to receive, totally student-centered learning with only the necessary facilitation to make the opportunity possible.

Beliefs

My beliefs about relating to people of whatever race or background apply to relating to orphan children or possible rich donors. I have had friends, rich and poor from many races, and lived as the rich or as the poor myself. I know that people are people, although we need to brush the mud off when it comes to someone coming from much hardship. Experience has strengthened my conviction that I need to relate to all and have empathy and compassion for all. Over the years, I have been friends to rich "poor people" and poor "rich people", and at times have felt my heart break for each of them. My conviction to see past their outward appearance and circumstance and care about their real person inside has also been strengthened by what I have learned throughout life. Finally, I realize that we are all orphans, in a way, until we find meaning and share love in life, so this idea challenges me to keep looking for the orphans in this world and help them to find what they need. I am reminded of what was said in the book *Becoming a Global Competent Teacher* about needing to move past empathy and on to "caring for", meaning to put our good intentions into action to help someone (Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2019). I am challenged to reach out to all the underserved people and help them to receive what they need. Experience is helping me to define my plans in this respect. These beliefs can positively help me to give instruction to the underserved groups I go to because they can help us to connect and relate. As far as negatively affecting my instruction toward a group, I sometimes tend to be too compassionate if that is possible when it is necessary to require and expect more from people, to help them reach their greatest potential. In the case of orphans, many great people have come from that group.

Conclusion

It is easier to settle for a belief that the problem of orphans in whatever form cannot be solved than to move society to not only believe that the problem can be eradicated but take the actions to make it happen. Sometimes looking at the numbers involved can help us to see possibilities that we would not otherwise see, thus energizing us to rise to the challenge. Taking the responsibility for an additional child in whatever form is not a small step for anyone and to think that such a large portion of

the world population as the entire middle class and above would even consider doing it might seem outlandish and unreasonable to most, seeing the current world economic situation. On the other hand, numbers do not lie and can show us possibilities beyond what we thought was possible. Sustainable development projects can take time and meet political and government-level economic obstacles which waylay efforts, but meanwhile, children suffer and die daily for a lack of timely care which at a citizen-to-citizen level could have been given. That is within our grasp, even if sacrificial for some, even if it is only until the sustainable development goals can be reached and take effect around the world, enabling each region to become self-sustaining. Would we tell our own children to wait on that if they were in such life and death struggles and needed our help today? We should consider counting these as our own children. That seemingly simple decision would be our next action step. Consider the relatively immediate change that decision would bring to the world. This generation would be known as the generation that took the step together to banish orphanhood. It is possible.

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