

IF THE solution to breaking poverty is hard work, then the poor should be rich, for the poor in the world work the hardest and the longest of any economic group.

The solution to crippling poverty is not just hard work. The solution lies in changing our strategies on how to end poverty.

It is hard to admit – but much of it has been wrong – and wrong for a very long time.

Many NGO and government programmes on poverty reduction or poverty elimination only focus on basic food, primary health care, basic education and basic shelter.

Very few are able to move beyond this simplistic notion of poverty relief to articulating wealth creation strategies for poor people.

For decades, poverty relief programmes have been about strategies that only have a survivalist trajectory and not a wealth trajectory. Our education have taught us “that the poor will always be with us”. Many, however, fail to see that the same man who said these words, also said that “there should be no poor among you”.

Training poor people in ownership, business or economics hardly forms any part of poverty elimination strategies. Instead, we have reduced our

#changethestory



LORENZO A DAVIDS

APPROACH TO POOR IS DEAD WRONG (PART 1)

success and their existence to teaching them how to cook cheap meals, have safe sex and fewer children.

If we can disrupt such belittling concepts of our fellow human beings and their poverty, we would be able to unleash new levels of motivation in poor people to create wealth for themselves. Let me be clear: my definition

of wealth creation is the right to make one’s own decisions about what meal one will eat, what shelter one desires, what education one will pursue, and what health care one will decide upon for oneself and one’s family.

The only way to stop the growing surge in bad poverty reduction practices is to disrupt the current thinking. The outcome of current strategies is that for the vast majority of poor people their life trajectory is one of being born with government aid, living their entire lives on government aid and then dying the same way – still poor. In their lifetime, they would have consumed millions of rand worth of government aid. Tragically, these lauded strategies are producing these as current outcomes.

Each year, billions of dollars are given to end poverty, but they end up in the hands of those who cannot comprehend an end to poverty. That is why, after spending billions of dollars, the UN’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2000, said nothing to the poor about not achieving the eight poverty reduction goals. In 2015 those same bureaucrats designed the “Sustainable Development Goals” and told the world that by 2030 poverty would be reduced significantly.

Did anyone notice that they just

gave themselves 15 more years to access billions more dollars of aid funding to trot all over the world to “reduce poverty.”

What is the end vision of this Darwinian poverty elimination trajectory? That the poor will have moved from living on \$1.50 (R25) a day to \$3 a day? We write reports that call that success. The apostles of poverty relief are too scared to use the words “poor people” and “wealth creation” in the same sentence, and therefore they cannot even begin to strategise for it.

Government and NGOs struggle to conceive the economic prosperity of the poor. It would be better to tell the poor upfront that there is no plan to get them out of poverty and that the best they should expect is to have their poverty relieved by a marginal \$2 a day over their lifetime!

A massive disruption is required to change the poverty discourse and change the current trajectory.

The ideas that have promoted such uninspiring approaches to ending poverty must be discarded to the dustbins of failed projects.

Strategy determines the conversation.

If we don’t change the strategy, we will never have a different conversation – nor a different outcome.