

BASIC HEALTH DEFINES OUR HUMANITY: THE MINIMUM COMMON HUMANITY LEVEL: A Tool FOR Social Change and Peace-Building

THE MINIMUM COMMON HUMANITY LEVEL (MCHL). When the needs contained in this tool are not met, members of the communities concerned descend to an animal standard. Five key factors are important for fleshing out the MCHL concept:

Factor 1: Basic needs are those of the bottom or least-resourced part of the society. They provide an accurate, credible picture of the situation in each country.

Factor 2: Production of goods and services, including basic material and expertise, necessary for the satisfaction of basic needs must occur within the country, preferably within disadvantaged communities. This allows the creation or the strengthening of local capacity and creates conditions of sustainability.

Factor 3: Universal basic needs to take into account must be health and poverty eradication oriented including: food/nutrition, clean water, sanitation, shelter, morbidity and mortality rates/ infectious disease rates, and basic education. In addition to the basic needs that are essentially linked to physical health, the measurement of MCHL must include the capacity to satisfy the basic psychological needs. The empowerment of poor people, the need for them to be part of the creation of their future is at the heart of health, development and peace link.

Factor 4: The effectiveness of each country can be assessed on the basis of the percentage of its citizens forced to live at an inhuman standard.

Factor 5: Countries with high percentage of citizens living below the MCHL should be banned from international human gatherings, negotiations and networks. They should be disqualified from receiving international aid, until they decide to allocate the majority of their national resources to making the majority of their citizens human.

MCHL as a socioeconomic development tool with health as a vital component is not only dependent on a country's health but also related to existing political will to contend both at the policy level nationally and regionally, as well as in relation to any action that will require allocation of scarce resources.

While there are obvious health benefits to a country and its population in the activation of the MCHL, there are highly significant economic implications. All countries face potentially sizeable loss in production when the majority of people, due to ill health are not at their fullest capacity to contribute to country's economic development.

But more profoundly, it gives us an occasion to affirm, that: IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD. Indeed, African children were not born to be raised only by their biological parents. At different stages of their lives, they move from biological parents to uncles, aunts or grand-mothers.

The tragedy in the age of AIDS is not only the lost of biological parents, but the lost of this whole network of critical relations. Keeping the village alive and healthy becomes a corner stone of a sustained support to AIDS orphans. It goes beyond survival. It ensures that AIDS orphans and other distressed children will grow to care for their own children, breaking the cycle of death and desolation.

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