Confronting Poverty: Reflections from a Public Health Student
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When I first applied to this workshop, my understanding of poverty was mostly shaped by what I saw in my daily life, along with a bit of theoretical knowledge. During my bachelor's degree, we talked a lot more about inequality than poverty itself. And even when we did discuss poverty, it was just one issue among others, not the focus of analysis.

I saw this workshop as a chance to deepen my understanding of poverty as a global and systemic issue. I expected to explore its economic, sociological, political, and philosophical aspects. But one thing that really surprised me during this workshop was the linguistic dimension of poverty. I hadn't thought before about how the way we talk about people living in poverty actually shapes the solutions we come up with. A great example of this came from the small group discussion where we analyzed articles on "period poverty." Most of the articles linked the lack of access to period supplies to a lack of education. They focused primarily on young girls and women, but the same issue also applies to employment. We also noticed that these articles rarely included the voices of women when discussing the implementation of solutions for period poverty. This is likely because both menstruation and poverty remain significant taboos in society. Maybe, if we want to develop effective policies to reduce poverty, we should stop treating these issues as taboos and start learning directly from those affected. By doing so, we can create bottom-up policies that are more inclusive and impactful.

Another key takeaway for me was the discussion on "Equitable and Sustainable Well-being" (BES) as an economic approach to tackling poverty. We explored how different policies can target various aspects of well-being, going beyond just economic growth.
We also discussed the policies we could put in place in our respective countries that would implement the various BES criteria. During our concluding discussion on this subject, we concluded that we needed solutions at the 'glocal' level, i.e. both global and local level.
In our final discussion, we agreed on the need for "glocal" solutions—approaches that work across both global and local levels. As a public health student, I immediately saw the relevance of this term in relation to migrant health. For example, the ecological crisis is partly responsible for migration flows caused by natural disasters and rising sea levels. This form of displacement leads to health inequalities, both because migrants may contract diseases during or after migration, and because they often face barriers to accessing healthcare in their host countries. Tackling this means acting on both fronts: on the one hand, at a global level, to reduce the ecological crisis; and on the other, at a local level, to build inclusive health systems that ensure migrants can access care.

Finally, I've been thinking about how this workshop connects to my master's thesis on life dilemmas and how to include them on health technology assessment (HTA). Poverty plays a huge role in the kinds of dilemmas people face, like choosing between healthcare and other basic needs or making short-term sacrifices for long-term benefits. The discussions we've had here will definitely help me refine my research, especially in understanding how economic and social policies influence health decisions.

Further Reading and References

- Workshop: *Confronting Poverty*, Interdisciplinary Sessions, UCLouvain, 2025.
- ISTAT (2025). **Equitable and Sustainable Well-being (BES)** Framework.
- Discussions on **Period Poverty** and media framing (workshop group analysis).
- Morisod, K., Vann, M., Senn, N., & Bodenmann, P. (2022). Migration forcée, crise climatique et équité en santé : quesls enjeux ?. Dans N. Senn, M. Gaille, M. del Rio Carral, & J. Gonzalez Holguera, Santé et environnement : Vers une approche globale (pp. 108-131). Chêne-Bourg: RMS editions.
- The author used AI-assisted language revision in accordance with academic integrity policies. Content was entirely written by the author and reviewed using generative AI tools for clarity and style only.