Poverty: A Global Review
Handbook on International Poverty Research

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Foreword
Gro Harlem Brundtland
Prime Minister of Norway

Life at the edge of existence. This predicament is shared by the
equivalent of the populations of the USA, Europe, and Russia,
and the number is increasing every year. Poverty is still the
greatest thing to human dignity. Poverty is the scar on humanity's
face. Poverty is prevalent despite decades of international efforts
to eradicate it.

Our inability so far to beat poverty haunts our common
political record. Our history of dealing with poverty is an epic
of protracted stalemates, indifference, bureaucracy, and empty
rhetoric. People and countries of goodwill have made serious
efforts, only to suffocate in the quagmire of inefficiency,
institutional rivalry, and inconsistent follow-up.

One hundred years ago, Norway was among the poorest
countries in Europe. Its present society is shaped by generations
of people who have made workable compromises between capital
and labour within the framework of representative democracy.
There is no other way to equity, prosperity, and social
justice than empowering people (men and women), allowing
democracy to work, harnessing the forces, taxing surplus,
and redistributing the proceeds.

We know a lot about the effects of poverty, how it is linked to
environmental decline, how it squanders human resources, how
it undermines the potential of countries. We know a
great deal about the causes of poverty. In country after country
we see the link between low rates of school enrolment and
poverty, between insufficient basic health services and poverty,
between the absence of credit opportunities and the presence of
poverty, and between gender discrimination and poverty.

In the past, we have adopted work programmes and plans of
action, even priority programmes, which have been acted on