

- Rob:** Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Rob.
- Vera:** And hello, I'm Vera.
- Rob:** In today's programme, we have news of a **pioneering** scheme to help families in one of the World's poorest countries.
- Vera:** Yes, that country is Nepal, where it is estimated 40% of the population live in poverty. So they have poor living standards and do not have access to facilities that some of us take for granted. But how bad do things have to be to live in poverty?
- Rob:** It's a good question. The government in Nepal has launched a new scheme to assess **the extent** of poverty in the country – in other words, to find out how bad it really is.
- Vera:** It's very keen to find out exactly how many people are living below the poverty line, or in other words, to work out who the poorest people are.
- Rob:** We'll find out more about this scheme shortly but, as always, we like to start the programme with a question to think about. So here is the question. According to the International Monetary Fund, the IMF, which is the poorest country in the world? Is it:
- a) The Democratic Republic of Congo
 - b) Malawi
 - c) Burkina Faso
- Vera:** I would take a guess that it's Malawi.
- Rob:** Malawi, b. Well, we will find out if you're right at the end of the programme. But before then, let's talk more about this new scheme by the Nepalese government to assess the extent of poverty in the country.
- Vera:** It's a massive undertaking because officials will be going from house to house across the country gathering **data**.
- Rob:** It could take some time. But once this data – or information – is collected, what are the government going to do with it?
- Vera:** Let's hear from the BBC's Jill McGivering, who can tell us a bit more about what is going on.

BBC correspondent, Jill McGivering:

Officials in Nepal are starting a massive task: going from house to house across the country, gathering data about each family's income, assets and how much food they have to eat. They're trying to identify those living in extreme poverty - people who go hungry for either three, six or nine months of each year. They'll later allocate new 'poverty cards' which will make these families eligible in the future for government subsidies - cheaper food, education and health care. Officials expect about a quarter of the population to be issued with them.

Rob: So, we heard that the government is trying to identify those living in extreme poverty – so the worst kind of poverty.

Vera: It will be finding out about people's income, their assets - so what they own – and how much food they have to eat. Those who are in extreme poverty have been defined as people who go without food for between three and nine months each year.

Rob: Those people who fall into this category will later be **allocated** 'poverty cards' which give these families **subsidies** – or financial support – for food, education and health care.

Vera: And the scheme could help a quarter of the population, so it sounds like a good idea.

Rob: It does. Many people have welcomed the idea but there are challenges too in running such a big scheme. Let's hear from the BBC's Jill McGivering again. See if you can hear what the challenges are.

BBC correspondent, Jill McGivering:

The government's been talking for years about introducing a scheme like this. Those involved are delighted that the process has finally started, although this is only the first phase and no-one's sure how many months it will take just to survey the whole country. They describe it as pioneering but also admit there will be challenges. Making sure people give accurate information, for example, preventing bias against different ethnic groups and protecting the programme from fraud and corruption. The best judges, of course, will be Nepal's most poor - whose burden this new national programme is supposed to ease.

Vera: So there are a number of challenges in running this scheme. They include relying on people to give accurate information and preventing **bias** – or prejudice – against different ethnic groups.

Rob: Yes, there are many different ethnic groups in Nepal, so it's important to make sure that one isn't favoured over another. Finally, there's a risk that there could be fraud and **corruption** because of the economic advantages on offer to the poorest families.

Vera: Of course, the other challenge is how many months it will take and no-one is really sure, especially because of the mountainous **terrain** that some people live in.

Rob: But people seem delighted – or happy – that after years of talking, something is finally being done to tackle poverty in Nepal.

Vera: But who can really tell if it's successful or not?

Rob: Well, the best judges – as we heard – are Nepal's poor, whose lives may be made a little easier.

Vera: Well, something that isn't easy is your quiz question Rob.

Rob: Really?! Well, earlier I asked you, according to the IMF, which is the world's poorest country?

- a) The Democratic Republic of Congo
- b) Malawi
- c) Burkina Faso

Vera: And I said Malawi. Was I right?

Rob: I'm afraid you were wrong. The answer is actually The Democratic Republic of Congo. OK, it's almost time to go now but before we do, Vera, please can you remind us of some of the vocabulary we heard today?

Vera: Yes, of course. We heard:

- pioneering**
- the extent**
- data**
- allocated**
- subsidies**
- bias**
- corruption**
- terrain**

Rob: Thanks Vera. We hope you've enjoyed today's programme. Please join us again soon for more 6 Minute English from bbclearningenglish.com. Bye for now!

Vera: Bye!

Vocabulary and definitions

pioneering	new and original
the extent	the amount
data	information
allocated	given an amount of
subsidies	a sum of money from the government or financial support
bias	prejudice in favour or against someone or a group of people
corruption	dishonest conduct by someone in charge or power, sometimes involving bribery
terrain	an area of land, described with reference to its physical features

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http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/general/sixminute/2012/09/120920_6min_nepal_poverty.shtml

More information about Nepal:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12511455>