

BIG STORY
big story

230 families living under poverty in Hidd

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The BD70 and BD337 limits won't work now. The living expenses have spiraled in the past seven years. We need new numbers.

MINISTRY OFFICIAL

Hopelessness has invaded the families as most youths are jobless

● Many families are indebted and family heads don't have proper jobs here.

● People are tired of poverty, but their pride stops them from complaining.

TDT|Manama
Thamer Tayfour

More than 200 families live under poverty in Al Hidd, making it the poorest city in the Kingdom, according to a charity organisation.

Officials at Al Hidd Charity Society say there are 230 families living below poverty line in Al Hidd, while 530 families come under the low-income category.

The society says the number could be even higher as there are many families who don't receive any help from it.

Many families are indebted and family heads don't have proper jobs here. Thirty-eight years old Hasan Gallium, who was working with the Ministry of Education and lost his job a year ago, said poverty is an enigma in his city. Hassan lives with his three children and mother.

“I don't have even 100 fils in my pocket and I always think of suicide, but what keeps me going is my faith in God and my prayers.”

“My 72-year-old mother gets BD250 from the Government and we all survive with that money. A good share of her income goes in paying bills.

“There are no jobs, no income and we only have God. Many in the city are resorting to illegal acts to make money, to win their breads.

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AL SAHAF

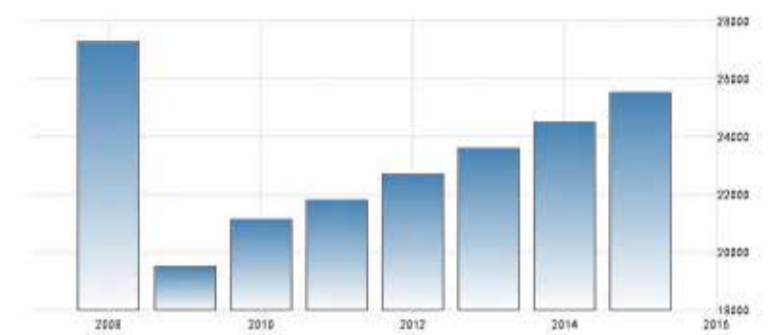
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I get threatening calls from people I have borrowed money. I ask them to report to police so that I can have proper food in jail.

EMAD

them. For us there are no festivals or celebrations.”

Hasan said people are struggling to come out of poverty, while their pride stops them from complaining.

According to a study carried out by the Ministry of Social Development in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank in 2011, a family of five having a



SOURCE: WORLD BANK

The Kingdom's per capita GDP (in US dollars) has gone up since 2010.

monthly household income of less than BD337 or an individual earning below BD70 a month lives under the poverty line.

Speaking to Tribune, Abdel Nasser Al Sahaf, head of public relations at Al Hidd Charity, confirmed there are 230 families who live below the line of poverty in Al Hidd.

“We provide them with monthly assistance, and we have done a lot of research. There are 530 needy families in the city and we aid about 300 families intermittently.”

The fund has distributed BD20,000 to poor families during Ramadan; BD80 per family under the poverty line, and between BD50 and BD60 per low-income family.

Other charity organisations have donated BD30,000 to the needy families during the holy month to Hidd families. “Poverty has literally reached its limit in Hidd.”

Al Sahaf added 230 iftar meals were distributed among poor families and food items were distributed to 447 families.

Emad, a 32-year-old youth, is hardly hopeful about authorities solving the issues faced by residents. Emad has been unemployed since 2008.

He has registered with the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, but it has made no difference to his life.



According to a study carried out by the Ministry of Social Development in cooperation with UNDP in 2011, a family of five having a monthly household income of less than BD337 or an individual earning below BD70 a month lives under the poverty line.

“No one employs us, though there are many projects coming up in the Kingdom. I often get threatening calls from people I have borrowed money. I now ask them to report to police so that I can have proper food in jail. I have nothing to settle my debts. If I make BD20, my priority would be to feed my children.”
Abdullah, another citizen from

Al Hidd, who doesn't want to be named, said he and his younger brother are both unemployed and live with their father who doesn't even get pensions.

“The Ministry of Labour and Social Development supports us with BD150 a month and that's all what we have. We don't have a good house to live, no good food to eat. Only God knows our misery.”

Abdullah said all complaints and pleas for assistance have fallen on deaf ears.

Ali Rahma lives in his father's house that may collapse any moment. “My brothers and I all have big families. Three big families live in a five-bedroom house that may collapse any time. We cannot afford to take apartments on rents. We are waiting for Housing Ministry to offer us a unit. That has been our dream for a long time now.”

A source at the Ministry of Labour and Social Development said that it's high the Government come up with a new definition for poverty in the Kingdom. “The BD70 and BD337 limits won't work now. The living expenses have spiraled in the past seven years. We need to come up with new numbers to define actual poverty.”

“The ministry has launched an initiative to develop the work of charity societies and funds in addition to projects that enable citizens to make a living in select areas. This will improve the socio-economic situation of these families.

“The performance of charities in Bahrain is still below the expected level. We receive their reports and their incomes are quite high. They can end poverty if the money is well channelled and distributed.”

“Financial support does not improve the lives of these families. It's just a temporary solution. We need turn individuals into productive citizens who can eventually become financially independent.”



Abdullah's house (right) and Ali Rahma's house...dilapidated houses are marks of poverty in Hidd.