**The Heart of Poverty***Matching passion with precision for struggling New Zealanders*

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This document is an answer form for the questions posed in Maxim Institute’s issues paper *The Heart of Poverty*. The questions at the end of each section are reproduced here, with space to type answers below each question at your convenience. Feel free to answer as many or as few questions as you wish, all contributions are valuable to us.

Maxim Institute looks forward to receiving your views by Thursday 31 July 2014. They may be directed to Kieran Madden at kieran.madden@maxim.org.nz or to the address below:

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**1. Questions – Introduction**

1.1. In your opinion, what situation would someone have to be in to be considered poor in New Zealand today? What comes to mind when you think of the word poverty? Can you describe the characteristics of someone who is “poor?”

**2. Questions – Understanding Poverty**

2.1. Which aspect(s) of poverty in the diagrams do you think are most important? (p4) Why?

2.2. Which notion of the good life do you find most persuasive? (p4) Why? What does it look like in NZ? How important are cultural differences?

2.3. Do you agree that there is a broad consensus of basic needs in New Zealand? Would the 1988 (p5) description need updating for 2014? If so, what would you add or take away?

2.4. To what extent do you think ideologies impact the way poverty is understood, debated and tackled in New Zealand?

2.5. Is this a fair assessment of the ideological history of New Zealand? (p5-6) If not, what changes would you make? Are there any significant events missing from this discussion?

2.6. To what extent do you think the moral deserving/undeserving poor distinction remains in New Zealand?

2.7. Which resonates most with you, the individualistic or structural approach to poverty? Is it a blend of both?

2.8. In your opinion, which approach to justice holds more weight? Merit, equality, or need? (p6-7) Why?

2.9. What value(s) do you consider central to understanding and addressing poverty? In a sentence or two, describe in detail what it means to you and why it matters.

**3. Questions – Defining Poverty**

3.1. Should New Zealand adopt an official poverty definition?

3.2. To what extent does how we define poverty dictate how we respond to it?

3.3. Is the discussion on the synthesis between absolute and relative poverty convincing? If not, which approach do you favour and why? Do you agree that there is “real” poverty in New Zealand?

3.4. Do you agree with this distinction between poverty and inequality? Does the gap between the rich and the poor matter? Why?

3.5. Are there any basic material needs missing from the above list? (p14) Any that shouldn’t be there?

3.6. In your opinion, how important is income for understanding and addressing poverty? Is it given too much or not enough focus?

3.7. Do the definitions offered ignore the spiritual, non-material aspects of poverty? If you think these are important, how might we incorporate or acknowledge them?

3.8. Do you believe that New Zealand’s current welfare system provides enough resources for people to belong and participate in society? If not, should it? Why/why not?

3.9. Do you think the above definition captures the essence of poverty? If not, how would you define poverty?

**4. Questions – Measuring Poverty**

4.1. Is the assessment of average income thresholds fair? (p17-18) Are there any arguments for or against missing?

4.2. Are there any major ways of measuring poverty that are missing? Similarly, are any misrepresented?

4.3. On balance, which measure—or combination of measures—do you think is most appropriate for New Zealand? Why?

4.4. How useful do you think multi-dimensional measurements and social indicators are?

4.5. Is New Zealand doing enough to measure poverty? What more, if anything, should be done?

4.6. Should we legislate poverty reduction targets in New Zealand? If so, why, and what would they look like?

**5. Further Questions**

We have intentionally left discussions about the causes and consequences of poverty and policy solutions designed to combat it for further papers. This is because these issues are too important to address without first consulting widely; discussions need to be based on a shared language and understanding of poverty. We recognise these are critical aspects to discuss, so to help start this conversation, please consider the below questions:

5.1. From your experience or research, what do you think are the main causes of poverty in New Zealand? If you could only name one causal factor, what would it be and why?

5.2. In your opinion, what are the consequences of poverty in New Zealand for individuals, communities and society as a whole?

5.3. What role should the government play in fighting poverty? Are they doing a good job? What should they do policy-wise? Is the current system politically, socially, and economically sustainable?

5.4. Which interventions are effective? Which aren’t? Give examples where possible, either locally or overseas?

5.5. Who else is responsible for alleviating poverty? What roles should community groups, NGOs, churches, businesses and families play?

5.6. How does the economic system affect poverty? Does it help or hinder, or is it somewhere in between? Why?

5.7. What do you think is the relationship between work and poverty? How should we respond to those considered to be the “working poor”?

5.8. Do you consider the current focus on individuals and children in poverty to be helpful? Should we focus on families instead? What about ethnic groups?

5.9. What factors would you say are unique to New Zealand when understanding and addressing poverty?

5.10. Any further questions or comments?