Negative: Decreased Poverty

By Kirstin Erickson

***Resolved: Economic stability is more important than economic growth***

This case is designed to balance pragmatism with emotional appeal. Economic growth can be portrayed as an impersonal tool for making as much money as possible, even at the expense of human rights and environmental stability. That’s where the value comes in. By framing the debate around the idea of decreasing poverty, you have a compelling reason for wanting to grow the economy and a noble goal that anyone would want to rally behind. With lots of evidence at your disposal that economic growth reduces poverty, your only challenge will be keeping things understandable and down-to-earth for the judges. It’s easy to throw around statistics about the billions of people in poverty and the percentages of increase and decrease, but don’t stop there. Keep digging for personal stories and real-life examples so that your points remain accessible and concrete.

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Negative: Decreased Poverty

Amartya Sen, Indian philosopher and economist, once said, “Poverty is not just a lack of money; it is not having the capability to realize one's full potential as a human being.” Currently, billions of people across the globe are surviving on just a few dollars a day, unable to break out of the cycle of poverty and fully realize their potential in life. Yet we have the opportunity to imagine a different future. Please join me in negating the resolution: Economic stability is more important than economic growth.

DEFINITIONS

Economic Stability

Business Dictionary (Business Dictionary is the leading online business resource, featuring over 25,000 definitions spanning across critical business-related topics) “Economic Stability” <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/economic-stability.html>

A term used to describe the financial system of a nation that displays only minor fluctuations in output growth and exhibits a consistently low inflation rate.

Economic Growth

John L. Cornwall (John Cornwall is Professor of Economics at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He is the author of The Theory of Economic Breakdown and others) “Economic Growth” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/economic-growth>

Economic growth, the process by which a nation’s wealth increases over time. Although the term is often used in discussions of short-term economic performance, in the context of economic theory it generally refers to an increase in wealth over an extended period.

VALUE: Decreased Poverty

Poverty definition

James Chen 2020 (James Chen, CMT, is the director of trading & investing content at Investopedia and former head of research at Gain Capital. For two decades, he has been heavily involved in the financial markets as a trader, investor, registered investment adviser, and global market strategist) “Poverty” <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/p/poverty.asp>

Poverty is a state or condition in which a person or community lacks the financial resources and essentials for a minimum standard of living. Poverty means that the income level from employment is so low that basic human needs can't be met. Poverty-stricken people and families might go without proper housing, clean water, healthy food, and medical attention.

Reason to Prefer: Urgent and widespread issue

Hundreds of millions live in extreme poverty, and billions live in multidimensional poverty

World Vision 2020 (World Vision is a global Christian humanitarian organization that partners with children, families, and their communities to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice) “Global Poverty: Facts, FAQs, and how to help” <https://www.worldvision.org/sponsorship-news-stories/global-poverty-facts>

Recent estimates for global poverty are that 9.2% of the world, or 689 million people, live in extreme poverty on $1.90 or less a day, according to the World Bank.

In the United States, 11.8% of the population or 38.1 million people, live in poverty — with an income of less than $33.26 per day — according to the 2018 census.

These numbers are calculated based on income and a person’s ability to meet basic needs. However, when looking beyond income to people experiencing deprivation in health, education, and living standards, 1.3 billion people in 107 developing countries are multidimensionally poor, according to a 2020 report by the U.N. Development Program.

Current issues hinder poverty reduction

World Vision 2020 (World Vision is a global Christian humanitarian organization that partners with children, families, and their communities to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice) “Global Poverty: Facts, FAQs, and how to help” <https://www.worldvision.org/sponsorship-news-stories/global-poverty-facts>

But the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to reverse decades of progress in the fight against global poverty and income inequalities, and it jeopardizes the future of a generation of children.

While the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is unknown, the World Bank estimates that an additional 88 million to 115 million people will fall into extreme poverty in 2020, with the total rising to as many as 150 million by 202

Reason to Prefer: Injurious to humanity

Poverty is a violation of human rights

UNICEF 2000 (UNICEF, the United Nations Children’s Fund, is a United Nations agency responsible for providing humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide) “Poverty Reduction Begins with Children” <https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/pub_poverty_reduction_en.pdf>

Poverty remains among the most important human rights challenges facing the world community. Based on the equal worth and dignity of every individual, human rights are central to well-being. Freedom from want and fear constitutes the fundamental condition to enjoy that well-being, while freedom from discrimination forms the basis for social protection and effective participation in society.

Negative impacts on children

James Chen 2020 (James Chen, CMT, is the director of trading & investing content at Investopedia and former head of research at Gain Capital. For two decades, he has been heavily involved in the financial markets as a trader, investor, registered investment adviser, and global market strategist) “Poverty” <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/p/poverty.asp>

The impact that poverty has on children is substantial. Children who grow up in poverty typically suffer from severe and frequent health problems while infants born into poverty have an increased chance of low birth weight, which can lead to physical and mental disabilities. In some impoverished countries, poverty-stricken infants are nine times more likely to die in their first month compared to babies born in high-income countries.﻿ Those who live may have hearing and vision problems.

As a result, children in poverty tend to miss more school due to sickness and endure more stress at home. Homelessness is particularly hard on children since they often have little to no access to healthcare and lack proper nutrition—which often results in frequent health issues.

CONTENTION 1: Economic growth is the key to decreasing poverty

Economic growth is the most powerful instrument for reducing poverty

Department for International Development 2008 (The Department for International Development was the government department of the United Kingdom responsible for administering overseas aid. The goal of the department was "to promote sustainable development and eliminate world poverty". Through the DAC Evaluation Resource Centre, the Network collected evaluation reports from all its members' development agencies to create an extensive resource that provides evaluators with evidence of what works and what does not.) “Growth: Building jobs and prosperity in developing countries” <https://www.oecd.org/derec/unitedkingdom/40700982.pdf>

Economic growth is the most powerful instrument for reducing poverty and improving the quality of life in developing countries. Both cross-country research and country case studies provide overwhelming evidence that rapid and sustained growth is critical to making faster progress towards the Millennium Development Goals – and not just the first goal of halving the global proportion of people living on less than $1 a day.

Growth can generate virtuous circles of prosperity and opportunity. Strong growth and employment opportunities improve incentives for parents to invest in their children’s education by sending them to school. This may lead to the emergence of a strong and growing group of entrepreneurs, which should generate pressure for improved governance. Strong economic growth therefore advances human development, which, in turn, promotes economic growth.

Economic growth is an important means for reducing poverty by raising incomes

Richard H. Adams, Jr. 2003 (Economist and poverty expert in the Development Research Group at the World Bank in Washington, D.C.) “Economic Growth, Inequality, and Poverty” <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1357182>

The basic finding is that economic growth represents an important means for reducing poverty in the developing world. This finding is robust for the two definitions ofgrowth used in this study. When economic growth is measured by survey mean income (consumption), there is a strong, statistical link between growth and poverty eduction. When economic growth is measured by GDP per capita, the statistical relationship between growth and poverty reduction is still present, albeit not quite as strong.

Why is economic growth so important in reducing poverty? The answer to this question has been broached at several points in this analysis. Economic growth reduces poverty because first and foremost growth has little impact on.income inequality. Income distributions do not generally change much over time. Analysis of the 50 countries and the 101 intervals included in the data set shows that income inequality rises on average less than 1.0 percent per year. Moreover, econometric analysis shows that economic growth has no statistical effect on income distribution: inequality may rise, fall or remain steady with growth.

Since income distributions are relatively stable over time, economic growth - in the sense of rising incomes - has the general effect of raising incomes for all members of society, including the poor. As noted above, in many developing countries poverty, as measured by the $1 per person per day standard, tends to be "shallow" in the sense that many people are clustered right below (and above) the poverty line. Thus, even a modest rate of economic growth has the effect of "lifting" people out of poverty. Poor people are capable of using economic growth - especially labor-intensive economic growth which provides more jobs -- to "work" themselves out of poverty.

Economic growth is the main driver of poverty reduction

Beatriz Pérez de la Fuente 2016 (Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs in the European Commission, the executive branch of the European Union) “Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction in a Rapidly Changing World” <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/eb019_en_2.pdf>

Economic growth has been the main driver of poverty reduction. The academic literature typically shows that economic growth is the cornerstone for income growth, including for the bottom 40 % of the income distribution (Dollar et al, 2013). In the early 1990s, growth took off across the developing world and accelerated further in the early 2000s, which was a time of unprecedented economic growth and poverty reduction for developing countries and emerging markets. Since 1990, the global poverty rate has been fallen by roughly 1 pp. a year, although the most rapid decline occurred in the 2000s. Between 2001 and 2013, developing countries that were either emerging markets, Sub-Saharan African countries or low-income countries grew on average by more than 5 %, which enabled strong poverty reduction. Kraay (2006) offers the estimate that growth in average income accounts for between 70 % and 95 % of the observed poverty reduction. Other estimates point to two thirds of the drop in poverty as being a result of economic growth, with the other third a result of greater equality.

Case Study: Asia and Africa

Xavier Sala-i-Martin 2002 (Faculty research fellow at the National Bureau of Economic Research, and Professor of Economics at Columbia University, Ph.D. Harvard University) “THE WORLD DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME (ESTIMATED FROM INDIVIDUAL COUNTRY DISTRIBUTIONS)” <https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w8933/w8933.pdf>

The combination of spectacular reductions in Asian poverty with the disastrous increases in Africa led to a dramatic shift in the fraction of the world’s poor hosted by each continent (reported in Table 4C). In 1970, only 11% of the world’s one-dollar poor lived in Africa and 76% in Asia. By 1998, the numbers had almost reversed: 66% lived in Africa and 15% in Asia.

The main reason for decline in poverty in Asia is almost all the countries in that continent experienced rapid aggregate growth. The main reason for the increase in poverty in Africa is that almost all countries in that continent experienced negative growth. The lesson is very clear: if we want to reduce poverty rates in Africa, we must find a way for that continent to grow. The welfare implications of finding how to turn around the growth performance of Africa are so staggering, that this has probably become the most important question in economics.

Case Study: Mexico

Daniela Bergmann 2018 (Author at the Chicago Policy Review interested in social and economic development. Prior to attending Harris, she worked at the Central Bank of Mexico and also has experience in the private and academic sectors. She holds a degree in Economics from the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City.) “Does Economic Growth Help or Hinder Poverty Alleviation? A Case Study From Mexico” <https://chicagopolicyreview.org/2018/03/06/does-economic-growth-help-or-hinder-poverty-alleviation-a-case-study-from-mexico/>

In search of answers, Campos and Monroy-Gómez-Franco analyzed the relationship between economic growth and poverty for all 32 Mexican states to see if a state’s economic growth is associated with decreased levels of poverty. The authors estimated the sensitivity of poverty to changes in economic growth for each state in the period between 2005 and 2014, calculating poverty as the percentage of people with incomes below the minimum welfare line (Índice de la Tendencia Laboral de la Pobreza) and economic growth based on the quarterly indicator of state economic activity (Indicador Trimestral de la Actividad Económica Estatal).

The authors found a negative relationship between growth and poverty in the short-term: an increase in growth was associated with a decrease in the number of people earning an income below the minimum welfare line.

MPX: A flourishing society

Kimberly Amadeo 2020 (Kimberly Amadeo has over 20 years of senior-level corporate experience in economic analysis and business strategy. She is the U.S. Economy expert for The Balance and is president of WorldMoneyWatch, which produces publications about the global economy that are easy to understand, succinct, and full of practical information) “Economic Growth, Its Measurements, Causes, and Effects” <https://www.thebalance.com/what-is-economic-growth-3306014>

Economic growth creates more profit for businesses. As a result, stock prices rise. That gives companies capital to invest and hire more employees. As more jobs are created, incomes rise. Consumers have more money to buy additional products and services. Purchases drive higher economic growth. For this reason, all countries want positive economic growth. This makes economic growth the most-watched economic indicator.

CONTENTION 2: Economic stability is not most important in decreasing poverty

Macroeconomic stability is only one factor in the overall goal of growth

Brian Ames, Ward Brown, Shanta Devarajan, and Alejandro Izquierdo 2001 (Brian Ames was an international economics and finance expert with extensive experience in Africa, Asia and in the U.S. He worked as an economist at the International Monetary Fund from 1986 until 2008 and then as an independent development consultant. Ward Brown received his PhD in economics from the London School of Economics and worked as an economist at the IMF for seven years before spending five years working at the London School of Economics. Shanta Devarajan is Professor of the Practice of Development at Georgetown University. He was previously the Senior Director for Development Economics and a former Acting Chief Economist of the World Bank Group. Alejandro Izquierdo is Principal Technical Leader of the Research Department of the Inter-American Development Bank) “Macroeconomic Policy and Poverty Reduction” <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/exrp/macropol/eng/#fig1>

Because economic growth is the single most important factor influencing poverty, and macroeconomic stability is essential for high and sustainable rates of growth. Hence, macroeconomic stability should be a key component of any poverty reduction strategy. Macroeconomic stability by itself, however, does not ensure high rates of economic growth.

Economic stability is only necessary insofar as it allows for growth

Economics Online (Economics Online is a digital resource for students of economics, providing information and analysis on a comprehensive range of topics) “Stabilisation and growth” <https://www.economicsonline.co.uk/Global_economics/Policies_for_stability_and_growth.html>

Economic stability enables other macro-economic objectives to be achieved, such as stable prices and stable and sustainable growth. It also creates the right environment for job creation and a balance of payments. This is largely because stability creates certainty and confidence and this encourages investment in technology and human capital.

Affirmative Counter-Brief: Human Flourishing

As the affirmative, I don’t suggest you try to argue the value. Instead, you’ll be focused on deconstructing the thesis that economic growth is the key to reducing poverty, while stability is less important. This affirmative counter-brief gets you started by including two main points of argumentation. First, while economic growth is a factor in reducing poverty, it is not certainly not the most important or only factor. Second, economic stability is indeed essential; without it, a poverty reduction strategy is doomed to fail.

Economic growth is not the key to reducing poverty

Counter-example: Sub-Saharan Africa has not reduced poverty despite robust economic growth

Beatriz Pérez de la Fuente 2016 (Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs in the European Commission, the executive branch of the European Union) “Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction in a Rapidly Changing World” <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/eb019_en_2.pdf>

However, Sub-Saharan Africa has been much less successful in terms of poverty reduction, despite its relatively robust annual economic expansion of 4.5 % from 1995 to 2013. First, Sub- Saharan Africa’s poverty rate is not only the highest but also the deepest in the developing world. Second, in countries that are initially more unequal, like most in Sub-Saharan Africa, economic growth is less effective at lifting people out of poverty.

Despite impressive aggregate growth, many developing countries remained in poverty

Montek S. Ahluwalia Nicholas G. Carter, and Hollis B. Chenery 1979 (Montek Singh Ahluwalia is an Indian economist and civil servant who was the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission of India, a position which carried the rank of a Cabinet Minister. Nicholas G. Carter was an international economist at the World Bank. Hollis Burnley Chenery worked at the U. S. Economic Cooperation Administration in Paris and served as The Economic Advisor to the President of the World Bank. He was a professor of economics at both Stanford and Harvard University.) “Growth and poverty in developing countries” <https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-3878(79)90020-8>

Although the output of the world economy has expanded at an unprecedented rate in the past quarter century, the benefits of growth have only reached the world’s poor to a very limited degree. This is not due to any failure of developing countries as a group to share in the general economic expansion. Their income per capita rose by almost 3 percent per year over this period - considerably faster than in the past. The failure lies in the distributional pattern of past growth, which has left the poorest groups largely outside the sphere of economic expansion and material improvements.

There are two aspects to this phenomenon. First, the impressive growth record of the Third World as a whole conceals the fact that most of the poorest countries, containing the principal concentrations of the world’s poor, have experienced lesser increases. Second, and equally important, there is mounting evidence that the growth processes under way in most developing countries are such that incomes of the poorer groups increase more slowly than the average.

Outside factors such as income inequality hinder economic growth from reducing poverty

Nora Lustig 2002 (Nora Lustig is Samuel Z. Stone Professor of Latin American Economics and Director of the Commitment to Equity Institute (CEQ) at Tulane University. She is also a Nonresident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, the Center for Global Development and the Inter-American Dialogue. Professor Lustig’s research is on economic development, inequality and social policies with emphasis on Latin America. She received her doctorate in Economics from the University of California, Berkeley) “Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth” <https://www.wider.unu.edu/publication/poverty-reduction-and-economic-growth>

How quickly growth reduces poverty depends both on the initial income distribution and how it evolves over time. In societies with more unequal distributions the same growth rate makes far less of a dent in poverty. Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, have some of the widest income disparities in the world. Given these initial levels of inequality, the region would have to post a 3.4 percent annual growth rate in per capita income (twice that recorded in the past decade), on average, in order to halve the percentage of people living on less than two dollars a day (in purchasing power parity) by 2015.

How efficiently average growth will reduce poverty also depends on how the income distribution shifts as the economy grows. In Mexico, for example, per capita real income rose by 4.8 percent annually between 1996 and 1998, but there was virtually no change in extreme poverty. Yet in Costa Rica, where per capita real income edged up by barely 1 percent annually between 1990 and 1998, poverty was reduced significantly.

Economic stability is essential to decreasing poverty

Decreasing poverty is inherent in economic stability

The Rural Health Information Hub (The Rural Health Information Hub was launched in December 2002 as the national clearinghouse of the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy. The Rural Health Information Hub is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.) “Programs that Focus on Improving Economic Stability” <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/sdoh/2/economic-stability/index>

Economic stability allows people the ability to access resources essential to life, including financial resources, quality housing and food, and a job that provides a stable, living wage. According to the Healthy People 2020 social determinants of health (SDOH) organizing framework, factors that affect economic stability include:

* Employment and work environment
* Food access to address food insecurity
* Affordable housing
* Access to transportation
* Income/poverty and financial resources

Important indicators of economic instability in rural areas include unemployment rates, housing and food insecurity, and poverty rates.

Economic stability is paramount for decreasing poverty

Christine Lagarde 2013 (Christine Lagarde is a French politician and lawyer. She is President of the European Central Bank, and former chair and managing director of the International Monetary Fund) “Stability and Growth for Poverty Reduction” <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2015/09/28/04/53/sp051513>

I will begin with the over-riding importance of economic stability. We have learned that output declines caused by economic crises are the biggest source of long-lasting welfare losses among developing countries. For this reason, the first best contribution that the IMF can make to reducing poverty is to help avoid crises.

On average, it takes 6-12 years for developing countries to return to pre-crisis per capita GDP levels after an initial output drop.

Moreover, this is not only an issue for developing countries. In the United States, for example, per capita GDP in 2012 was estimated to be about 9 percent lower than what it would otherwise have been without the global crisis.

Job losses are another huge cost of crises. Today, over 200 million people are still unemployed. This has immense economic and human costs. So, first principle: economic stability is paramount for poverty reduction.

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