

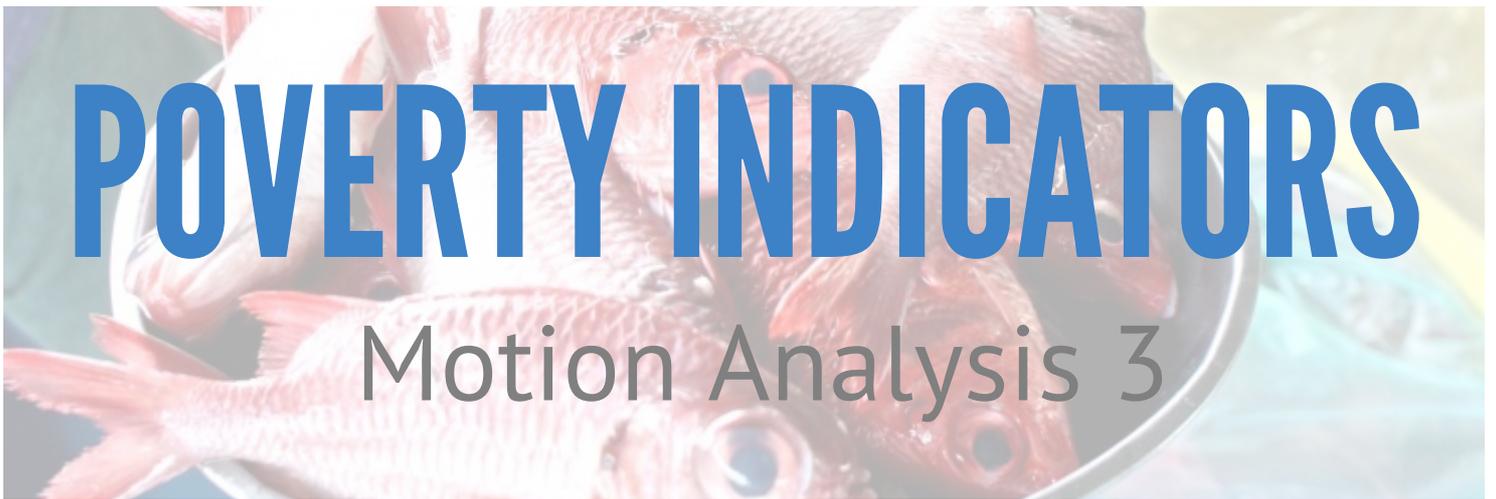


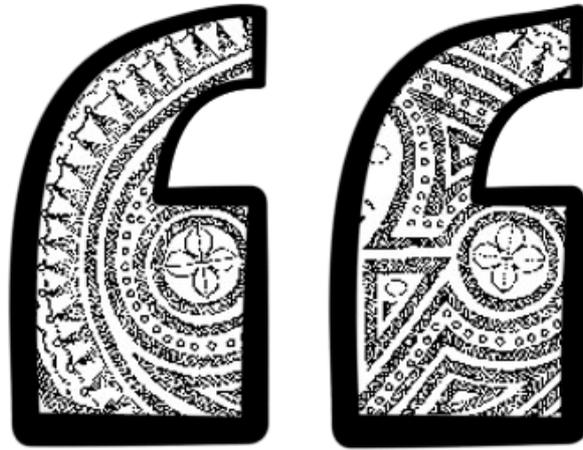
MELANESIAN SCHOOL  
DEBATE



# POVERTY INDICATORS

Motion Analysis 3





# MELANESIAN SCHOOL DEBATE

**MOTION:**

# POVERTY IS INCREASING IN MELANESIA



**Pacific Institute  
of Public Policy**

POVERTY INDICATORS, Debate Preparation 3

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The Pacific Institute of Public Policy is the leading independent, non partisan think tank serving the Pacific islands region. We exist to stimulate and support informed and inclusive policy debate in and about the Pacific island countries

Our Motion Analysis are short papers that dissect and further inform debate motions that have been put forward in the Melanesian School Debate 2015.

The Melanesian School Debate is and is an annual event bringing the best and the brightest of Melanesian Youth together to debate pressing policy issues affecting our region.

This year's event is hosted by the Pacific Institute of Public Policy, in association with the Vanuatu Ministry of Education in Port Vila, November 2015

# Poverty Indicators

**PROGRESS IN MELANESIA** is hard to define. With so many different factors to consider - access to health services, safe drinking water, education standards, service delivery, employment levels - it can be hard to determine whether overall conditions in Melanesia are improving, stagnant or going backwards. The level of poverty is one indicator which can help us see if our governments and civil society are succeeding in providing basic services to their citizens.

**Poverty can be defined in two ways. *Relative poverty* involves the comparison of one person, or country to another. By international standards Melanesian countries are poor - that is their Gross Domestic Produce (GDP) per capita is lower than that of the global average. *Absolute poverty* on the other hand refers to a set standard, which the United Nations defines as those earning under \$1.25 US a day.**

Poverty in the Pacific is subjective. It is relative, not absolute. For those living in urban centres, money is a major part of ensuring a good standard of living. For those in rural areas, this is not necessarily the case if the basics of food water and shelter are provided. Instead of monetary values, poverty in Melanesia should be looked at in terms of access and opportunity; access to healthy food, good education, health services, employment, peace and basic infrastructure. These are the elements that determine quality of life.

On the surface it would seem that Melanesian countries are increasing in poverty. With cities doubling every 15 years, high numbers of school and university graduates cannot find work, putting pressure on our urban environments, where in some settlements one person working is providing for ten or more. Service delivery both in towns and rural settings is low, as unstable governments often appear to be managing their coalition numbers rather than actually governing. Sectors of the formal economy are also lagging, challenged by external pressures such as Vanuatu's devastating Cyclone Pam, while the global downturn in prices for oil and gas is undermining Papua New Guinea's revenue projections.

Yet equally, studies on our informal sector have suggested that the *kastom*, or informal economy has been successful enough to keep the main population out of

poverty, providing enough income to maintain food shelter and their children's education.

Over the past decade, new opportunities have also presented themselves. Mining and extraction of natural resources is providing a high source of employment in Papua New Guinea and the Solomons. Tourism markets in Vanuatu and Fiji have steadily increased. Large foreign aid budgets continue to roll in, with ongoing development projects in even the most remote communities. More recently, seasonal workers programs have boosted intakes, stimulating Pacific economies and offering international migration pathways.

Although Pacific nations struggled in general to make progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) could give us the metrics to better work towards alleviating poverty.

There are some positives if we look beyond money as definition of poverty. In 2006, for example, Vanuatu ranked the highest country on the Happy Plant Index; a new measurement to gauge well-being and life expectancy, instead of income.

Is poverty growing or do we need to even challenge the very notion that poverty exists within our region?

# Key Terms to Define

**DECONSTRUCTING THE MOTION** will ensure you are clear in the parameters of your debate. By understanding and analyzing each term you can gain a deeper understanding of the underlying issues.

## TERMS to deconstruct

**POVERTY** : Absolute, or Relative? As defined by who? Poverty can often be defined in Western standards - what does poverty mean to Melanesians? What does it mean to be living in poverty? What are the major indicators to track? How and who track's these indicators?

**INCREASING** : what is the level of poverty in Melanesia currently? How has this been measured? How does it relate to similar measures of poverty in the past?

**MELANESIA**: don't forget to look to all Melanesian countries for examples - not just your own.

## CONCEPTS to research

### International Aid

National Government targets and strategies    New employment opportunities

World Bank

Quality of Life

Relative poverty

basic infrastructure

Living below the Poverty line

Service Delivery

Happy Planet Index

Alternative Indicators for well being

Gross Domestic Produce per capita

absolute poverty

Living standards

# Essential Reading

**IN DEPTH RESEARCH IS CRUCIAL** to constructing a convincing and accurate argument. Be creative and use different methods to collect your research materials. Talk to organisations, find case studies in the newspaper, look up books or search through journal articles online.

**REMEMBER! All sources should be as recent as possible. Try not to use sources older than 5 years - from 2010-2015 is best! Here are a few to get you started:**

L.Russell, 'Poverty, climate change and health in Pacific island countries' *Menzies Centre for Health Policy*, 2011, <http://sydney.edu.au/medicine/public-health/menzies-health-policy/publications/pacificislands2011.pdf>.

Pacific Institute of Public Policy, 'Food for Thought' *Discussion Paper 19*, 2011  
<http://pacificpolicy.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/2/files/2015/02/D19-PIPP.pdf>

R. Regenvanu, 'The traditional economy as source of resilience in Vanuatu,' *Edited version of a speech presented at "Pacific Islands and the World" Conference in Brisbane*, 3 August 2009. <http://goo.gl/Hpi5IV>.



# DEBATE IT!

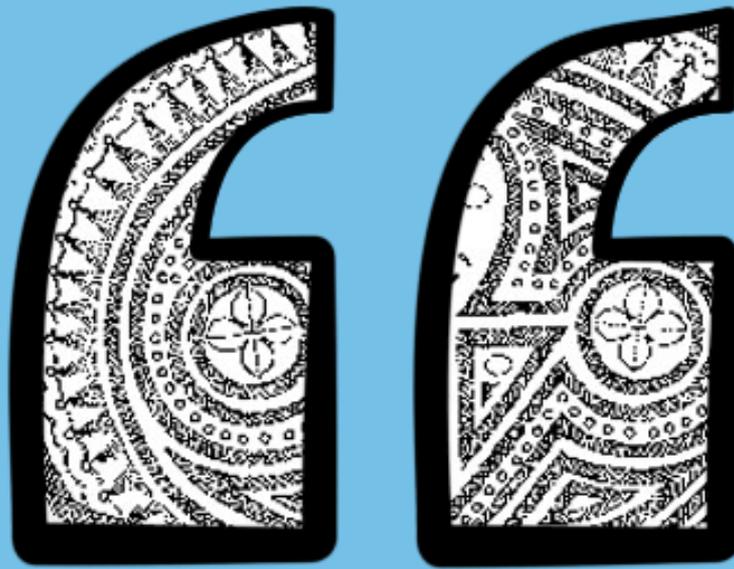
## AFFIRMATIVE

- Melanesian nations are rapidly urbanising. Cities are doubling every 15 years, and governments are struggling to make adjustments accordingly. Settlements in town are increasingly overcrowded and without access to basic facilities including good sanitation, electricity and clean water. With limited access to gardens, access to healthy traditional food is decreased, and families are more reliant on cheap alternatives with no nutritional value. Studies have shown that these cheap snack foods are causing malnutrition as well as Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) putting further strain on family budgets.
- For all Melanesian cities, there are not enough jobs to support the growing population. School and university graduates cannot find work, and growing families are increasingly reliant on the income of a sole earner. Wages are low in general, and minimum wages are often overlooked as regulatory bodies fail to hold small businesses to account. For rural workers, employment can be unreliable, as markets can be dependant on international demand and prices, or affected by environmental changes or disaster.
- With the changing of the climate, Melanesians are becoming more vulnerable to climate related natural disasters. Rising sea levels are damaging gardens and contaminating fresh water sources. Cyclone Pam in early 2015 affected a huge percentage of the population, leaving thousands homeless and without access to clean water. Damaged gardens also resulted in food shortages that lasted for over 6 months. The region is now preparing for the devastating consequences of an El Nino in the region, with the potential to jeopardize rural communities who depend on their gardens and consistent rainfall. People who were once able to support themselves and live to a good quality of life are no longer able to, and Melanesian governments are failing to step up and fill the gap.
- Environmental degradation is having dramatic effect on communities across Melanesia, limiting access to basic needs including land, food and clean water. In Papua New Guinea, mining is affecting water sources and damaging traditional agricultural land. In the Solomon Islands, logging is degrading the environment at a rate that is unsustainable, increasing the chance of natural disaster as well as displacing local communities. Throughout Melanesia growing rural populations have overfished reefs, along with international illegal fishing vessels, reducing access to food for traditional fishing communities.

# DEBATE IT!

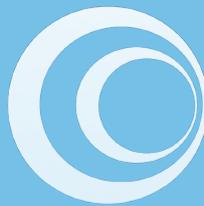
## NEGATIVE

- Although cities may be growing, the vast majority of Melanesians still live in rural communities, supporting themselves and their families through the *kastom* or informal economy. Although many may not be earning \$1.25 per day, traditional methods allow families access to basic requirements including healthy food, clean water and shelter, keeping them out of the 'relative poverty' bracket. For many, gardens and traditional methods of employment will provide sufficient funds for their children's basic education, and a good standard of living.
- Access to good education, health services, employment and basic infrastructure including electricity is increasing for both rural and urban residents. Aid projects and donor partnerships between governments have provided new opportunities, including upgraded health facilities, economic stimulus and business growth, improved education standards, access to new technology and even investment into good governance. These improvements are rapidly transforming Melanesian cities and smaller rural communities, providing more people with access to a better standard of living.
- There is a steady increase in the educational and employment opportunities available in Melanesia. Internationally and locally funded TAFEs and scholarships are providing new pathways for education, giving more youth Melanesians the opportunity to gain higher level jobs, or work abroad and remit money home. Even opportunities for low skilled Melanesians are increasing, with growing intakes for the Australian and New Zealand Seasonal workers scheme. international investors are bring new business, stimulating Melanesian economies and bringing new jobs. Mining and extraction of natural resources is providing a high source of employment in Papua New Guinea and the Solomons, while tourism markets in Vanuatu and Fiji have steadily increased.
- For Melanesians, quality of life is not based around finance. Despite appearing poor relative to neighbouring countries such as Australia, Melanesian countries place greater importance on family, traditional and preservation of culture, over material possessions. In 2006, Vanuatu was ranked the highest country on the Happy Plant Index; a new measurement to gauge well-being and life expectancy, instead of income. This demonstrates that while Melanesian nations might appear poor in comparison to other countries worldwide, standards are good and citizens are content in their way of living.



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