**PRO- We have an obligation to aid poor nations**

Many maintain that the citizens of rich nations have a moral obligation to aid poor nations. First, some have argued, all persons have a moral obligation to prevent harm when doing so would not cause comparable harm to themselves. It is clear that suffering and death from starvation are harms. It is also clear that minor financial sacrifices on the part of people of rich nations can prevent massive amounts of suffering and death from starvation. Thus, they conclude, people in rich nations have a moral obligation to aid poor nations. Every week more than a quarter of a million children die from malnutrition and illness. Many of these deaths are preventable. For example, the diarrhea disease and respiratory infections that claim the lives of 16,000 children every day could be prevented by 10 cent packets of oral rehydration salts or by antibiotics usually costing under a dollar. The aid needed to prevent the great majority of child illness and death due to malnutrition in the next decade is equal to the amount of money spent in the U.S. to advertise cigarettes. It is well within the capacity of peoples of rich nations as collectives or as individuals to prevent these avoidable deaths and to reduce this misery without sacrificing anything of comparable significance.

In making a case for aid to poor nations, others appeal to the principle of justice. Justice demands that people be compensated for the harms and injustices suffered at the hands of others. Much of the poverty of developing nations, they argue, is the result of unjust and exploitative policies of governments and corporations in wealthy countries. The protectionist trade policies of rich nations, for example, have driven down the price of exports of poor nations. According to one report, the European Economic Community imposes a tariff four times as high against cloth imported from poor nations as from rich ones. Such trade barriers cost developing countries $50 to $100 billion a year in lost sales and depressed markets. Moreover, the massive debt burdens consuming the resources of poor nations is the result of the tight monetary policies adopted by developed nations which drove up interest rates on the loans that had been made to these countries.

Those who claim that wealthy nations have a duty to aid poor nations counter the argument that aiding poor nations will produce more suffering than happiness in the long run. First, they argue, there is no evidence to support the charge that aiding poor nations will lead to rapid population growth in these nations, thus straining the world's resource supply. Research shows that as poverty decreases, fertility rates decline. When people are economically secure, they have less need to have large families to ensure that they will be supported in old age. As infant mortality declines, there is less need to have more children to insure against the likelihood that some will die. With more aid, then, there is a fair chance that population growth will be brought under control.

Moreover, contrary to popular belief, it is rich countries, not poor countries, that pose a threat to the world's resource supply. The average American uses up to thirty times more of the world's resources than does the average Asian or African. If our concern is to ensure that there is an adequate resource base for the world's population, policies aimed at decreasing consumption by rich nations should be adopted.

Those who support aid to poor nations also counter the argument that aid to poor nations rarely accomplishes what it was intended to accomplish. As a result of aid, they point out, many countries have significantly reduced poverty and moved from dependence to self reliance. Aid has allowed Indonesia, for example, to reduce poverty from 58% to 17% in less than a generation. There are, unfortunately, instances in which the poor haven't benefitted from aid, but such cases only move us to find more effective ways to combat poverty in these countries, be it canceling debts, lowering trade restrictions, or improving distribution mechanisms for direct aid.

Finally, it is argued, all human beings have dignity deserving of respect and are entitled to what is necessary to live in dignity, including a right to life and a right to the goods necessary to satisfy one's basic needs. This right to satisfy basic needs takes precedence over the rights of others to accumulate wealth and property. When people are without the resources needed to survive, those with surplus resources are obligated to come to their aid.