

Poverty, consumption, and environment:

The insidious relationship between poverty and the environment presents us with a dilemma of dealing with two of the largest global issues. This dilemma can be articulated as a tension between a poverty trap and a consumption trap that is perpetuated by resource constraints and the environmental consequences of our actions. The poverty trap, that people would like to escape, but cannot, is due to external factors. The consumption trap that people may not like to escape and in fact they pursue, is due to escalating commitment to a lifestyle of wasteful consumption. Poverty, consumption, and the environment are interconnected and any attempt at affecting one has an impact on the other. They operate as a complex system and generate difficult problems for us to solve. How, therefore, can we address the problems of poverty and the environment in a situation of finite resources even while we minimize the negative impacts on the environment? In our presentation we will discuss the role of business in poverty alleviation and environment protection. Enterprise-based solutions to poverty and environmental imperatives will require the development of new business models, with an extra set of self imposed constraints derived from the values of sustainability. Based on Base of the Pyramid and Triple Bottom Line models and concrete examples, we will analyze solutions attempting to break away from traditional linear responses to both problems and that can be sustained in the long-term.