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## Uneven Development and Global Inequalities

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### CHAPTER OVERVIEW

- The world is marked by spatial inequalities.
- There are a variety of tools to measure development, ranging from income per capita to a composite human development index (HDI).
- Uneven development issues in the less-developed world can include famine and malnutrition.
- Many of the world's refugees seek asylum in other countries in both the more- and less-developed world.
- Due to financial and human development factors, less-developed countries are also more likely to be negatively impacted by natural disasters.
- The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) proved to be successful in making positive change; therefore, a new set of development goals, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), have been introduced to further work towards diminishing inequality.
- In much of the less-developed world, what is needed is better government (i.e., democratic institutions) and security for the poor.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

- understand the different tools used to measure development;
- understand the global distribution of income, debt, and factors related to quality of life;
- describe some of the main differences between more-developed and less-developed countries
- understand some of the underlying causes of food shortages and debt in poorer regions of the world;
- understand how natural disasters and disease affect the less-developed world differently than the more-developed world; and
- understand the alternate theories explaining why less-developed countries remain so.

## KEY TERMS

**Civilization** A culture with agriculture and cities, food and labour surpluses, labour specialization, social stratification, and state organization. (p. 96)

**Colonialism** The forceful appropriation of foreign territory; usually established and maintained through military and political structures, also creates unequal cultural and economic relations; usually involves the displacement of Indigenous populations; a term usually reserved for the European variant of the process (1500-1945), but could apply to other cultures. (p. 97)

**Dependence** In political contexts, a relationship in which one state (or people) is dependent on, and therefore dominated by, another state (or people). (p. 97)

**Dependency theory** A theory that connects disparities in levels of development to the relationship between dependent and dominant states. (p. 98)

**Development** A process that brings about changes in economic prosperity and quality of life; an improvement in the material conditions of life; measured traditionally by economic criteria, but increasingly in more holistic ways including health, education, and so on. (p. 88)

**Developmentalism** An analysis of cultural and economic change that treats each country or region of the world independently in an evolutionary manner; an approach that assumes that all areas are autonomous and will proceed through the same series of stages of development. (p. 92)

**Environmental determinism** A view that cultures, and human behaviours, are directly shaped by physical environmental circumstances; contrasted with *possibilism*. (p. 96)

**Ethnocentrism** A form of prejudice or stereotyping that presumes that one's own culture is normal and natural and that all others are inferior. (p. 92)

**Eurocentrism** A view that places the historical experience of Europe (and its descendants) as the benchmark for all comparisons; a form of ethnocentrism. (p. 92)

**Gross domestic product (GDP)** A monetary measure of the market value of all goods and services produced within a country over a given time period (usually one year). (p. 89)

**Gross national income (GNI)** A monetary measure of the market value of goods and services produced within a country, plus income from investments abroad, over a given period (usually one year). (p. 89)

**Gross national product (GNP)** A monetary measure of the market value of all goods and services produced within a country, plus those produced by individuals and corporations (of that country) operating elsewhere, over a given time period (usually one year). (p. 92)

**Human Development Index (HDI)** A numerical measure of how well basic human needs are being met; a composite index incorporating health (life expectancy), education (years of schooling), and income (gross national income per capita). (p. 93)

**Import substitution** An economic strategy of domestically manufactured goods that were previously imported, through the aid of protective tariffs (taxation on imported goods); often used as a stimulus for industrialization. (p. 120)

**Industrialization** A process of economic and social change that transforms a society (country) from largely agricultural to industrial, involving an extensive reorganization of the economy toward manu-

facturing and society toward urban; typically associated with an industrial revolution; often regarded as a key step in increasing a country's level of development. (p. 119)

**Internally displace person (IDP)** An individual forced to flee their home in the face of persecution (religious, ethnic, political, etc.) or other threats to safety (war, natural disaster, political instability, etc.); unlike a refugee, they do not leave their home country. (p. 108)

**Malnutrition** An umbrella category of dietary conditions, including undernutrition and overnutrition, in which an individual's dietary needs are not being met, through too little food, or the wrong balance of foods (nutrients, vitamins, protein, and so on). (p. 100)

**Non-governmental organization (NGO)** A non-profit enterprise that works alongside government and international organizations to achieve development (economic, education, health care), humanitarian (human rights), and environmental goals; examples include Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), Oxfam, and World Wide Fund for Nature (formerly World Wildlife Fund). (p. 109)

**Possibilism** A view that human decision-making and adaptability, and not the physical environment, are the primary agents of cultural change; people and cultures pursue a course of action that they select from among a number of possibilities; contrasted with *environmental determinism*. (p. 96)

**Purchasing power parity (PPP)** A tool that measures the relative cost of a common market basket of goods and services for comparing cost of living between countries; useful in conjunction with aggregate macroeconomic measures of economic activity such as gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and gross national (GNI) per capita. (p. 92)

**Refugee** An individual forced to flee their home country in the face of persecution (religious, ethnic, political, etc.) or other threats to safety, such as war, natural disaster, or political instability. (p. 106)

**Structural adjustment program (SAP)** Conditional loans provided to less-developed countries by international development and lending agencies based in the more-developed world (e.g. the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund), whereby money is contingent upon the country adopting free-market policies, privatizations, and deficit reduction (often through reduced social spending). (p. 121)

**Undernutrition** A dietary condition in which an individual consumes a quantity of food insufficient to sustain normal and healthy life; sometimes referred to as undernourishment. (p. 100)

**World systems theory** A set of ideas centred around the notion that the world is an interdependent systems of countries linked together by an economic and political competition that shapes relations between core (more developed), semi-peripheral (less developed), and peripheral (least developed) countries. (p. 97)

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Research the Sustainable Development Goals and explain how different countries are working toward achieving them.
2. What is the relevance of world systems theory? How is this theory typically applied to the study of development? Illustrate your answer with examples.

3. Good governance is associated with improved living conditions in many less-developed countries. Should good governance be a core policy goal of international aid? Illustrate your argument with examples.
4. Some scholars say that food shortage and famine are associated with a lack of good governance. To what extent is this accurate? Are there other underlying factors influencing food shortage and famine?
5. Why are developing countries vulnerable to disaster and diseases? Illustrate your argument with examples and case studies.

## LINKS OF INTEREST

- UNHCR  
<http://www.unhcr.ca/>
- Make Poverty History  
<http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca/>
- The World Bank  
<http://www.worldbank.org/>
- The Grameen Bank  
<http://www.grameen-info.org/>
- Sustainable Development Goals  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>
- Canadian Council on Social Development  
[http://www.ccsd.ca/factsheets/economic\\_security/poverty/index.htm](http://www.ccsd.ca/factsheets/economic_security/poverty/index.htm)
- Gapminder  
<https://www.gapminder.org/>

## SUGGESTED READINGS

**Dickenson, J., et al. 1996. *A Geography of the Third World*, 2nd edn. New York: Routledge.**

This is an excellent overview that employs a developmentalist perspective to explore population and economic issues.

**Guest, R. 2004. *The Shackled Continent: Power, Corruption and African Lives*. Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press.**

This very readable account of Africa today stresses that the principal problems are political.

Peet, R., and E. Hartwick. 2009. *Theories of Development: Connections, Arguments, Alternatives*, 2nd edn. New York: Guilford.

This book provides a critical examination of theories of economic development in the context of current events and policy discussions.

Rosling, H. 2018. *Factfulness: Ten Reasons We're Wrong about the World*. New York: Flatiron Books

Statistical facts do not come easy to many and because of this, we have a negative perception of how the world is doing. In his book, Hans Rosling reveals ten instincts that distort our perception and explains how the world is doing better than we think.

## YOUTUBE VIDEOS

DeeJayAllah. 2012. "A Brief History of European Colonization in Africa." YouTube video, 4:01. Posted August 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pis5f085P3M>

1. What motivated the colonization of Africa?
  - Colonization was motivated by the European hunger for resources. The mindset of backwardness and that European expansion was propelling Africa into civility.
2. How did the British exploit ethnic and linguistic difference to help them keep British rule across the continent?
  - The British arbitrarily divided countries into areas. In Rwanda for example, the country was divided into North and South based on language ethnicity, and cultural differences. This created internal tensions which helped British remain in rule.

khanacademymedicine. 2013. "Cycle of Malnutrition." YouTube video, 4:24. Posted May 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yL8ejNmJII4>

1. What is the relationship between malnutrition and child health?
  - There are currently about 160 million children who are malnourished. One concern about malnutrition is that if a child is born malnourished, his or her immune system may be weakened and unable to fight off diseases. A compromised immune system will increase to both the duration and number of diseases that a child lives with.
2. How is malnutrition related to physical and mental growth of a child?
  - Malnutrition slows both the physical and mental growth of a child. That results in decreases in "normal" physical development and slows the natural maturation of a child.