

Chapter 9: Development

Chapter Outline

Introduction. Geographers study levels of development (the material conditions of people) to understand how development varies across space, the determinants of development, and economic connections between more developed and less developed countries (MDCs and LDCs). A central question is how less developed countries can develop.

Case Study. Bangladesh's Development Challenges. The Rahman family, led by a widowed mother of three, faces difficult conditions in Bangladesh. In particular, women in the less developed world have few opportunities for educational advancement and well-paid work.

Key Issue 1. Why Does Development Vary Among Countries?

The United Nations compares levels of development on an index--the Human Development Index (HDI)--composed of social, economic, and demographic indicators. Economic indicators of development include Gross Domestic Product per capita, the percentage of the workforce employed in primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors (agriculture, industry, and services), worker productivity, and the availability of consumer goods such as cars or computers. The HDI uses GDP per capita. Social indicators of development include measures of education like the literacy rate and student/teacher ration and measures of health and welfare such as average caloric intake and access to medical care. The HDI uses the literacy rate and amount of education (average number of years in school). Demographic indicators of development include life expectancy, the infant mortality rate, and crude birth rate. The crude death rate is not an indicator of development because it rises as a population ages. The HDI uses life expectancy as its final indicator.

Key Issue 2. Where Are MDCs and LDCs Distributed?

More developed countries are nearly entirely distributed northwards of 30 degrees north latitude, with less-developed regions making up most of the rest of the world. The most developed cultural regions are North America and Europe, with the addition of Japan and Oceania (mostly Australia and New Zealand). North America, Europe, and Japan all have HDI scores in the mid-0.90s on a scale of 0 to 1. Notable as an exception is Russia, which saw a dramatic decline in HDI in the post-Communist era.

Global Forces, Local Impacts: Regional Variations within Countries. Inequalities within countries can be masked by applying one HDI number to the entire country. Regional variations for Brazil, China, and Mexico are discussed.

Less Developed Countries are all those in Latin America, East Asia, Central Asia, Southwest Asia. North Africa, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa, in order from most to least developed. In contrast to the MDCs, there is a large range in levels of development, with Latin America averaging an HDI of 0.81 (the same as Russia) for the region and sub-Saharan African at 0.47.

Contemporary Geographic Tools: Wal-Mart and China. Wal-Mart's diffusion in its expansion across the United States displays an application of the **distance-decay** concept.

Key Issue 3. Where does level of development vary by gender?

Gender-Related Development Index (GDI). The GDI uses the same indicators as the HDI but broken up by gender to measure inequality in a country's development of women compared to men.

Gender Empowerment. The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is a measure of women's political and economic power, as measured by women's income as a percentage of men's, professional, technical and administrative jobs held by women as a percentage of those held by men, and percentage of women compared to men in elected legislatures.

Key Issue 4. Why do LDCs face obstacles to development?

Development through Self-Sufficiency. The **self-sufficiency** approach attempts to develop a country's economy by limiting imports and exports. The idea is that this will promote all parts of the economy, leading to jobs and development. Unfortunately the safeguards necessary to protect local industries from foreign competition also creates the opportunity for them to be inefficient. A large bureaucracy is also needed to regulate many aspects of the economy.

Development through International Trade. In contrast, the **international trade** approach to development allows for a country to specialize in relatively few local industries and trade with the international market for all other needs. This approach is idealized in Rostow's model based on the historic development of MDCs. Rostow's model appears to have been followed by the Asian "dragons" of South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

However, not all countries have equal access to the same resources (raw materials or labor) or to the same markets. Also, if a government adopts the international trade approach it may compromise its ability to care for its own people because of the resources diverted to support new industries. Finally, there may not be sufficiently large markets for all countries to compete using the international trade approach.

International Trade Approach Triumphs. Countries are embracing the international trade approach over self-sufficiency. The World Trade Organization and transnational corporations work to increase international trade.

Financing Development. Two UN agencies, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, provide loans to LDCs to develop. Large infrastructure projects have often failed to provide the intended economic stimulus and have left countries saddled with debt. Lenders' imposition of **structural adjustment programs** on poor countries was intended to restructure their economies so that they did not fall further into debt but critics claim that these programs bring even more hardship onto a country's citizens.

Fair Trade. The fair trade movement is an alternative vision of the international trade approach which attempts to address issues of low prices paid to producers in LDCs and eliminate low wages and poor working conditions for workers in LDCs.

Introducing the Chapter

Development captures the imagination of many students in a way that some other topics in economic geography do not. The great puzzle of why so many states continue to be poor despite many honest efforts to improve the lives of their people remains to be solved.

The chapter starts with a discussion of where less developed and more developed countries are distributed and the indicators of development. Some students may protest that many of the indicators are more or less connected with wealth, and that people might be poor and uneducated but still happy. Ask whether happiness can be measured between cultures and countries. Someone may volunteer Bhutan, which references the “gross national happiness” of its citizens.

Icebreaker: Vacation

Start a discussion with the class about “where would you like to go on vacation.” Decide on a popular less-developed destination and discuss what it is that makes it an attractive destination. Create a list of those amenities, which are likely to include an agreeable climate, scenery, and low prices for food and lodging. Now ask the class to consider the following questions:

- Are the people who live in this place year-round fortunate to live at such a desirable destination?
- What do the local people depend on for income? Does tourism play a role?
- What do the people in this country, who do not live in a tourist area, do for work?
- Can any of these people, who wish to, come to our country on a vacation? Why not? Is that fair?

Challenges to Comprehension

No middle ground?

Students may ask whether there are any countries that are “medium developed” instead of simply “less” and “more.” Instead of answering this question directly, consider asking your students to look at the HDI and make up their own minds. Note that some development agencies do reference low, medium, and high levels of development. Also suggest that if there were three categories, they might be named something else, such as “more developed,” “less developed,” and “much less developed.” Of course, the status of Russia raises the question of whether a country can become less developed (Russia’s HDI is the same as Latin America).

Former Soviet countries

The Human Development Index (HDI) for Russia and that of Latin America is equal. Thus, students want to know, how can one be considered less developed and the other more developed?

The best answer is probably that Russia has seen its level of development drop from a higher level whereas Latin America's HDI has been increasing.

The main statistic of distinction between these regions is that Russia is in late stage 4 of the demographic transition, with declining populations, while Latin America as a region is in stage 3, with population growth still creating issues for urban areas, job growth, the economy, and the environment.

Assignments

Review/Reflection Questions

- If you were to create an index of development, what indicators would you use, and why? How would you weight each indicator? Could your index be used around the world, or would it be mostly relevant to our society?
- The HDI is used to measure development at a whole-country level. Is it adequate to measure development *within* a country? Why or why not? (Another way of thinking about this: are there minority groups that might be “glossed over” by the HDI?)
- The GDI is used as a way of ranking development scores to compare the development of women compared to men in a society. However, looking at the Gender Development Index rankings might imply that those countries at the top of the list have gender equality. Discuss whether this is the case or not.
- Discuss whether our economy requires other countries to remain underdeveloped. That is, could we maintain our standard of living if the rest of the world had the same level of development, and thus presumably the same wages and costs of living? What does this mean for the future?

Assignment: Two Dollars per Day

An estimated three billion of the world's population subsist on less than U.S. \$2 per day.

Research and write a four-to-five page descriptive essay (approximately 1200 words) describing in detail what your life on this income (\$700 per year) would be like. Make sure to include:

- What do you do for work? Describe your daily routine.
- What happens when you become sick or injured?
- What are your most pressing concerns?
- What are your hopes for the future for yourself and your family?

Resources

United Nations Development Program

Online at <http://www.undp.org/>, the UN Development Program's site contains reams of information about development, including the annually themed Human Development Report.

For an excellent tutorial on the UN's development goals and the scale of global poverty, direct students to the "Human Development Trends 2005" animation. It may be necessary to use the UNDP's site search feature to find this report.

Transparency International

Some critiques of development charge that corruption in government plays a role in hindering development. Students can explore this through the reporting of Transparency International (<http://www.transparency.org>), a corruption monitoring and reporting organization operating around the world. Their 2009 Corruption Perceptions Index is available at http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2009.

Life and Debt

This 2001 film by Stephanie Black presents the case against the IMF's structural adjustment policies in Jamaica. The theme of the film echoes the introductory paragraphs of the chapter, contrasting the tourist experience with the lives of everyday Jamaicans in poverty.

Extremely popular with students, it features interviews with the then Deputy Director of the IMF and the former Prime Minister of Jamaica. This film serves as an excellent bridge to Chapter 10 because it raises the issue of farm subsidies in the developed world.

Bhutan: The Last Place

This is a 2002 PBS Frontline World documentary on the arrival of satellite TV to Bhutan, a mountain kingdom which did not have television until 1999.

The program website, including a 10-minute streaming video, is available at http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2009. Orville Schell comments on the Bhutanese conception of "gross national happiness" and the effects of TV in his essay at <http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/bhutan/gnh.html>.

United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

This is a clearinghouse of information on U.S. international development, including current projects, reports, and the agency's policy priorities and standards. Online at <http://www.usaid.gov/>.

Connections between Chapters

Back to Chapter 2

Instead of relying on the tenuous connection to Chapter 8, refer to Chapter 2. While many will have forgotten by now, ask what connection there is between countries in stage 2 of the demographic transition and their level of development...some lights should go on!

Forward to Chapter 10

A natural transition to Chapter 10 is suggested by the discussion in Key Issue 1 of measuring the division of labor by economic sector. This idea that the percentage of a country's labor force in each sector of the economy can serve as an indicator of development, prepares students to learn about each sector. The tremendous difference between the least developed countries and developed countries in agriculture is particularly relevant.