



Development

- [What is it?](#)
- [Why should I care?](#)
- [What is the international community doing?](#)
- [What can I do?](#)

What Is It?

Reaching an acceptable standard of living for all people by improving economic and social conditions.

The aim of development is to help people become more productive and to improve

the quality of life for individuals, families, communities and countries as a whole. As people become more productive, a country is in a better position to trade with other countries, and more trade means more goods and services to continue improving living conditions.

Development is a complex process, though. A country must concurrently pay attention to social, economic, political, cultural and environmental issues to ensure that development is sustainable and beneficial to all.

Reaching an acceptable standard of living for all people includes giving everyone access to the basics:

- Food
- Housing
- Jobs
- Health Services
- Education
- Safety and Security

Sustainable development means meeting today's needs and planning the country's growth without creating problems for future generations.

RELATED STORIES

- [Africa: Open for Business](#)
- [Africa's Growing Pains](#)
- [Next Steps for Development](#)
- [What Influences Development?](#)


World Development Report:

- [WDR 2007: Development and the Next Generation](#)
- [Tell World Bank Researchers What You Think \(WDR questions\)](#)
- [You Told World Bank Researchers What You Think \(WDR comments\)](#)
- [Ask a World Bank Researcher](#)

MULTIMEDIA

 Video: [Experts and youth talk about development.](#) [more](#)

LEARN MORE

 **Test your knowledge:** Take the [Youthink! quiz about Development](#), or check out the [Millennium Development Goals online chart](#).

[The Development Web](#)

DEPweb has online books and learning modules brimming with activities, information, case studies, colorful maps, charts, and photos that will help you explore the often complex—yet

Why Should I Care?

Because the world is out of balance.

There are 6 billion people alive today: One billion people live in developed countries. The other 5 billion live in developing countries where they barely survive on less than a dollar a day.

The one billion who live in developed countries control 80% of the global resources. This leaves the other five billion people to get by on 20% of the world's resources.

Populations in poor countries are growing much faster than populations in rich countries. Some 2 more billion people will be born, mostly to developing countries, over the next 25 years.

Poor countries need help to develop so that nobody goes hungry anymore, so that everyone can live in stability and peace, have an acceptable standard of living and choose how to live his or her life.

All countries are linked by trade, finance, environment, drugs, crime, migration, diseases/epidemics, etc.

Problems in one country inevitably affect other countries.

For example, internal conflict in one country puts in motion a slew of problems that transcend borders: diseases and epidemics can spread, refugees start moving, trade is disrupted.

intriguing—social, economic, and environmental issues of sustainable development. [more](#)

Explore these sites:

- [Global Development Finance Online](#)
- [Millennium Development Goals](#)
- [World Bank Environmental and Economic Indicators](#)
- [World Development Indicators](#)

TAKE ACTION

Search [Idealist.org](#) or the [UN Volunteer site](#) to find **development-oriented volunteer opportunities** in communities around the world.

THINK ABOUT IT

One country may have engineers who know how to build bridges but needs money to finance the construction. Another may have the money, but not the technical knowledge. Still another country may need both the money and expertise. And some countries may need help in setting up a training program to produce future engineers capable of building such bridges.

[^ top](#)

What Is the International Community Doing?

Development is a cooperative effort of many different groups.

The governments of poor countries do the best they can to improve domestic conditions.

Some countries need assistance to develop an economic foundation and reach the point where they can trade equally with all other nations. Many countries don't have enough resources, knowledge, expertise or funds to develop independently.

Multilateral assistance by multilateral institutions like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) provide money and fund projects to help nations develop.

Governments of most developed countries give money and assistance directly to poor developing countries.

Charitable groups and foundations around the world carry out projects within countries to help with development.

The Emergence of the International Development Field: How It Came About

International development—harnessing the resources and knowledge of rich, more developed countries to help the poorer ones catch up—is a concept that grew out of World War II. In its aftermath, world leaders realized that countries were like dominos—issues in one country will inevitably affect others nearby.

For example, fighting HIV/AIDS is one of the most important global issues today. But 20 years ago, nobody knew of this disease and nobody could've predicted how serious this pandemic would become.

Ideas of how to help countries grow and help their people change with time and often reflect other trends of what's going on in the world. For examples check out the History & Goals table to the right.

What Can I Do?

Learn about the world and current events. And volunteer.

If you live in a developed country:

- Find your national

IT'S A FACT

Development History & Goals

1940s: World War II ends

Goal: *Reconstruct Europe*

1950s: The era of engineers

Goal: *Build up infrastructure (roads, electricity, dams) in developing countries*

1960s: "Green Revolution," technology improves farming

Goal: *Plant better crops to wipe out world hunger*

1970s: Focus: Education

Goal: *Promote education*

1980s: Macroeconomics and fixing the prices because of high inflation

Goal: *Restructure public and private companies to improve their services*

1990s: The Cold War ends. Communism falls

Goal: *Help former communist economies transition to market economy. Help countries establish sound government institutions (fight corruption, promote transparency)*

2000s: Global partnerships and the **MDGs**

Goal: *provide people with basic needs so they become more self-sufficient and can contribute to their society*

[^ top](#)

volunteer service.

- Search through the [UN Volunteer](#) or [Idealist](#) websites to find volunteer opportunities worldwide to encourage sustainable development.
- Check out additional sites on our [Take Action resources page](#).
- Learn how much money your government gives through bilateral and multilateral assistance, and lobby your government to give more. View [official development assistance \(ODA\) levels by country](#).

If you live in a developing country:

- Stay in school—study and learn.
- Volunteer to help those in need.
- Encourage other kids and young people to stay in school and to volunteer.
- Learn how much money [your government receives in development assistance](#) and take action to ensure government funds are properly spent.

THINK ABOUT IT

In Their Own Words: Poor People Define Poverty

“Poverty is pain; it feels like a disease. It attacks a person not only materially but also morally. It eats away one’s dignity and drives one into total despair.” —
Woman from Moldova

“The authorities don’t seem to see poor people. Everything about the poor is despised, and above all poverty is despised.”
—*Man from Brazil*

Poverty means working for more than 18 hours a day, but still not earning enough to feed myself, my husband, and two children.” —*Woman from Cambodia*

“Take the death of this small boy this morning. The boy died of measles. We all know he could have been cured at the hospital. But the parents had no money and so the boy died a slow and painful death, not of measles, but of poverty.” —*Man from Ghana*

“I am illiterate. I am like a blind person.” —*Woman from Pakistan*

Poverty

Can you define poverty?

Poverty is more than a lack of money. It is a fear of and for the future, living one day at a time. It’s about lacking basic nutrition, health, education, freedom, representation. It’s about being invisible, voiceless and powerless to improve your living conditions on your own.