Social Development Indicators

Standards of living are difficult to measure, but indicators of social development are available. A basic measure, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, is the value of all goods and services produced within a region over a given time period, averaged per person. A more advanced metric, the Human Development Index (HDI), considers life expectancy, education, and GDP. The three highest HDI-ranked countries in the world are Norway, Australia, and Switzerland. Many of the indicators discussed below are used to measure progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), a set of targets agreed upon by United Nations member states as crucial for global human progress.

Population
- The 2015 U.S. population is 321 million and world population is over 7 billion.
- Global population is projected to reach 9.6 billion by 2050, with 6.4 billion people living in urban areas—a 61% increase from 2015.
- Significant issues affecting population, as reported by governments around the world in 2007, include HIV/AIDS, infant and child mortality, maternal mortality, adolescent fertility, and life expectancy at birth.
- Fertility rate, or number of births per woman (of child-bearing age), is projected to fall from a global average of 2.5 in 2010 to 2.0 by 2100. Currently, Niger has the highest fertility rate at 7.65; the U.S. fertility rate is 1.89.
- Life expectancy is around 50 years in many developing countries; life expectancy at birth for both sexes in the U.S. is 79 years.
- Globally, contraceptive use is increasing. Currently, contraceptive use is 3.6 times higher today when compared to 1970 and is 29.4 times higher in least developed countries. However, 20-34% of women of reproductive age still don’t have access to contraceptives in 43 countries.
- The U.S. is one of only three developed countries with an adolescent birth rate at 30 or greater (per 1000 births).

Standard of Living
- In 2011, 1.0 billion people lived below the world poverty line of $1.25 USD per day, down from 1.9 billion in 1990.
- According to the Gini Index, Sweden, Norway, and Montenegro have among the most equal income distributions in the world. With a rating of 40.8, the U.S. ranks in the bottom 50% in terms of income equality.
- In 2013, 14.5% of the U.S. population—45.3 million people—were living in poverty (income under $23,624 for a family of 4). For Hispanic and Black populations in the U.S., approximately 25% of each group was living below the poverty line.
- About 578,000 people were homeless in the U.S. in 2014.

Food
- Average proportion of income spent on food, beverages, and tobacco ranges from 20% in high-income countries to 49% in low-income countries. On average, Americans spend less than 10%, while Tanzanians spend 73%.
- Globally, 45% of deaths of children under 5 are caused by under-nutrition.
- The Green Revolution led to large increases in agricultural yields and helped feed the rapidly growing global population in the second half of the 20th century. Sub-Saharan Africa was the only developing region where increased food production was primarily due to increased crop area, not crop yield.
- The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization publishes a comprehensive set of food security statistics annually.

Water and Sanitation
- Approximately 2.5 billion people lack access to proper sanitation. Access is lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa, where only one in three people have proper facilities. Urban areas also have better sanitation coverage—80% have access to proper facilities, compared to 47% in rural areas.
- In 2012, 89% of the world population had access to clean drinking water, an increase of over 2 billion people since 1990. However, in Oceania and Sub-Saharan Africa only 45% and 53% of the rural populations, respectively, have access to clean drinking water.
- Only 6% of the rural population in Sub-Saharan Africa has water piped directly into their house or property.
Healthcare and Disease

- Globally, 35 million people were infected with HIV and 1.6 million died from AIDS in 2012. Most HIV cases—25 million—are in sub-Saharan Africa. Globally, the number of new HIV infections decreased 33% from 2001 to 2011, due to behavior changes and better treatment options; however, in the Middle East and Northern Africa, the number of new infections has increased more than 52% over the same time period.  
- Diarrheal diseases killed 810,000 people from 90 different countries in 2012 due to inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene services. Over 40% of those deaths occurred in India and 84% were children under the age of 5. 21,22 88% of infections are attributed to unsafe drinking water, improper sanitation services, and hygiene.  
- In 2013, approximately 584,000 people died from malaria, of whom 90% lived in Africa and 78% were children under 5. Preventive measures such as treated bed nets, indoor insecticide spraying, and anti-malarial drugs have reduced deaths. Since 2000, malaria mortality rates have decreased by 47% globally and 35 countries are expected to reduce their rates by 75% by 2015.  
- Indoor cooking with fuelwood and animal dung results in 2 million deaths per year, a majority of whom are women and children. 
- Cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death in the world. A healthy diet, regular physical activity, and avoiding tobacco could reduce the major risk factors associated with premature deaths from cardiovascular diseases and strokes. 
- Approximately 23% of deaths in 2012 were caused by communicable diseases. 
- Globally, about 100 million people fall under the poverty line each year due to out-of-pocket health care costs. 

Education and Employment

- Global literacy is significantly improving. For example, global youth literacy has risen from 83% in 1990 to 91% in 2015. 24 The gap in female and male literacy rates is also closing; in 1991, literacy rates were 86.6% and 77.3% for boys and girls, respectively. In 2015, the literacy rates are 91.8% and 91.2%, respectively. 
- Lesotho and Cuba spend the highest percentage of GDP on education, with each devoting between 12-15% each year from 2005-2010. The U.S. spends around 5.3% each year. 
- Sub-Saharan Africa primary school enrollment increased from 52% to 80% from 1990-2015; the 2015 world average is 91.4%. 
- In countries with Low Human Development, the average amount of schooling is 4.2 years. In Very High Human Development nations, the average is 11.7 years of school. 
- Top employers in developing countries are agriculture (64%), services (26%), and industry (10%); 60% of these jobs pay $1.25 USD/day or less. 

Environment

- Most global warming is “extremely likely” (>95% certainty) caused by anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In the 21st century, natural and social systems will likely face increasing risks of extinction for 20-30% of plant and animal species; more coastal flooding and erosion, heat waves, droughts, and tropical storm intensity; and health risks associated with malnutrition and water-related diseases. Declines in crop productivity in lower latitudes and freshwater availability are likely. Poor communities are especially vulnerable to climate change because of their low adaptive capacity and high dependence on climate conditions (e.g., rain for agriculture). 
- The Stern Review found that investing 1% of global GDP annually in GHG reductions could avert a permanent reduction of 2-10% GDP per capita due to climate change impacts. 

Conclusions

- In 2000, the UN established eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including reducing child mortality and ensuring environmental sustainability. Great progress has been made towards achieving these goals within the last decade. 
- Through 2015, Denmark, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom continued to exceed giving 0.7% of their Gross National Income (GNI) as Official Development Assistance (ODA) towards achieving the MDGs. 
- The U.S. donates a lower percentage of GNI, but the greatest dollar amount of any nation. In 2014, U.S. ODA totaled $32.7 billion.