



www.undp.org/hdr2003

Strictly embargoed until 12.00 GMT, 8 July 2003

**United Nations
Development Programme
contacts:**

New York:
William Orme
Tel: (212) 906-5382
william.orme@undp.org

London:
Christelle Chapoy
Tel: (44) 20 7630 9361
christelle.chapoy@undp.org

Geneva:
Laura Ngo-Fontaine
Tel: (41 22) 917 83 16
laura.ngo-fontaine@undp.org

Paris:
Abdoul Dieng
Tel: (331) 45 68 49 13
abdoul.dieng@undp.org

Bangkok:
Cherie Hart
Tel: (662) 288-2133
cherie.hart@undp.org

Bratislava:
Sandra Pralong
Tel: (421) 2 59 337 428
sandra.pralong@undp.org

Copenhagen:
Ragnhild Imerslund
Tel: (45) 35 46 71 50
ragnhild.imerslund@undp.org

Tokyo:
Akiko Fujii
Tel: (81) 35 467-4853
akiko.fujii@undp.org

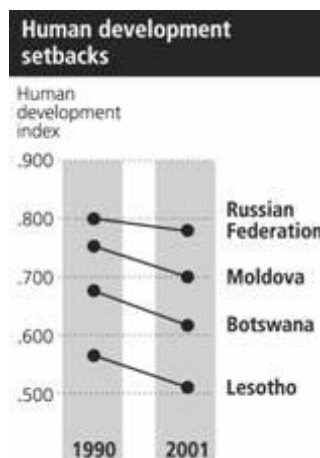
2003 Human Development Index Reveals Development Crisis

21 countries suffered socio-economic reversals in the 1990s

New York, 8 July 2003—The world is facing an acute development crisis, with many poor nations suffering severe and continuing socio-economic reversals, warns the *Human Development Report 2003*.

The Report's annual Human Development Index (HDI), measuring the progress of nations on key social and economic indicators, shows that 21 countries experienced declines in the 1990s. In the 1980s, only four countries tracked by UNDP showed similar decade-long declines.

"Reversals in HDI are highly unusual as these indicators generally tend to edge up slowly over time," said Mark Malloch Brown, UNDP Administrator. "The fact that over the course of the 1990's, 21 countries experienced a decline—in some cases a drastic drop—signifies an urgent call for action to address health and education as well as income levels in these countries."



Source: Indicator table 2.

The 2003 Human Development Index ranks 175 countries for 2001, the most recent year of available data. The top and the bottom of the Index remain unchanged from last year: Norway is on top and Sierra Leone is on the bottom. The Index, developed in 1990, takes stock of fundamental aspects of human development in countries both rich and poor. The Index is a composite measure of life-expectancy, education and income per-person.

- Almost all of the "low human development" countries at the bottom of the Index are in sub-Saharan Africa: 30 out of a total of 34.

- Roughly half of the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean recorded either a decline or stagnation in income during the 1990s.
- Eastern Europe and Central Asia saw an overall decline in the 2003 Human Development Index resulting from falling per capita income. The decline was particularly steep in Moldova, Tajikistan, Russian Federation and the Ukraine.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the devastation of the HIV/AIDS pandemic is responsible for the declines in the 2003 Human Development Index. Life expectancy has fallen dramatically with HIV/AIDS incidence rates as high as one in five in some countries. South Africa, for instance, fell 28 ranks from 1990 primarily because more people were dying younger from AIDS-related illnesses.

Declines in the Index for Botswana, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe tell a similar story. Yet there was also positive news from the developing world in the 2003 Human Development Index, with countries from all continents registering major gains since 1990:

Period	Number	Countries
1980–1990	4	Congo, Dem. Rep. of; Guyana; Rwanda; Zambia
1990–2001	21	Armenia ^a ; Belarus ^a ; Botswana; Burundi; Cameroon; Central African Republic; Congo; Congo, Dem. Rep. of; Côte d'Ivoire; Kazakhstan ^a ; Kenya; Lesotho; Moldova; Russian Federation; South Africa; Swaziland; Tajikistan ^a ; Tanzania ^a ; Ukraine ^a ; Zambia; Zimbabwe

Note: Based on a sample of 113 countries with complete data.
 a. Country does not have HDI data for 1980–1990, so fall in HDI may have begun before 1990.
 Source: Indicator table 2.

- Benin, Ghana, Mauritius, Rwanda, Senegal and Uganda have all significantly improved their rankings.
- Bangladesh, China, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal and Thailand also moved up over the last decade.
- Brazil recorded a big jump in the Human Development Index—due mainly to its education efforts. Bolivia and Peru also improved their positions as a result of social policy reforms over the same period.

In the *Human Development Report 2003*, two other indices shed light on important aspects of development:

- *The Human Poverty Index (HPI) for rich countries* which ranks them according to their national levels of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and life-expectancy. Sweden comes in at the top while the United States finishes last. The Report notes that Sweden, despite a lower per capita income than the United States, has, on average, more adults who are functionally literate and fewer living in poverty. This Index shows that even in middle or high income countries, inequity persists.
- *The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) which shows women's participation in the political and economic arenas.* Data from this year's GEM shows discrimination against women persists despite high national ranking on the Human Development Index. Many poor countries outperform far richer countries. In terms of participation and inclusion, women fare better in Botswana, Costa Rica and Namibia than they do in Greece, Italy and Japan.

“For the highly developed countries, the GEM and the HPI are much more meaningful measures of human development than the main Human Development Index,” said lead author, Sakiko Fukuda-

Parr. “These indices show that two countries can have similar human development ranking, but still differ sharply on the proportion of their citizens who remain excluded and lack opportunities.”

ABOUT THIS REPORT: Every year since 1990, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has commissioned the Human Development Report by an independent team of experts to explore major issues of global concern. A worldwide advisory network of leaders in academia, government and civil society contribute data, ideas, and best practices to support the analysis and proposals published in the Report. The concept of Human Development looks beyond per capita income, human resource development, and basic needs as a measure of human progress and also assesses such factors as human freedom, dignity and human agency, that is, the role of people in development. The *Human Development Report 2003* argues that development is ultimately “a process of enlarging people’s choices,” not just raising national incomes.

The *Human Development Report 2003* is published in English by Oxford University Press.

ABOUT UNDP: The United Nations Development Programme is the UN’s global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience, and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners.