

## **An Introduction to “International Development”**

**International Development:** The field of international development has the general mission of alleviating poverty and improving the quality of life of populations in 'developing' poor countries. Although this mission is inherently *interdisciplinary* (not multidisciplinary), meaning that it involves many *interconnected* disciplines, the field has been largely divided into various sectors: health, gender, agriculture, economics, governance, education, humanitarian affairs...etc.

**Poverty:** Poverty is one of the most basic concepts around which international development is centered, and yet it is generally misunderstood and oversimplified. Poverty is not a natural condition or a naturally-occurring disease to be eradicated. It is the symptom of a structural process that creates conditions of poverty. Poverty is not only measurable in income and GDP, it is also observable in access to water and sanitation services, gender dynamics within households, literacy rates, land ownership...etc. For a more comprehensive measurement of poverty and quality of life, visit the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Report: <http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/statistics/>

**Rights-based Development:** Rights-based development is international development based on the fundamental principle that every human being has non-negotiable rights (outlined in the various human rights conventions) that must be upheld. International aid and development initiatives shouldn't be considered as signs of generosity of developed countries, nor is this principle grounded in the Judea-Christian-Islamic tradition of charity. The premise of rights-based development are that it is everyone's responsibility to uphold basic human rights. Consequently normative human rights standards are integrated within the objectives of development initiatives.

### **International Rights Conventions & Other Important Documents (in chronological order):**

UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Geneva – 1948  
[www.udhr.org](http://www.udhr.org)

ICERD: International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination – 1965  
[www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/d\\_icerd.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/d_icerd.htm)

ICESCR: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – 1976  
[www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a\\_ccpr.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ccpr.htm)

ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights – 1976  
[www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a\\_ccpr.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ccpr.htm)

CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women – 1979  
[www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/)

CRC: Convention on the Rights of the Child – 1990  
[www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm)

UNFCCC: UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, New York – 1992  
<http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf>

Rio Earth Summit: UN Conference on Environment & Development (UNCED), Rio de Janeiro – 1992  
<http://habitat.igc.org/agenda21/rio-dec.html>

ICPD: UN International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo – 1994  
[www.iisd.ca/Cairo.html](http://www.iisd.ca/Cairo.html)

BPA: The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Fourth World Conference on Women – 1995  
[www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/)

Kyoto Protocol: The Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change – 1998  
<http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/kpeng.pdf>

MDGs: The Millennium Development Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals – 2000  
[www.undp.org/mdg/](http://www.undp.org/mdg/)

Other Resources:

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
<http://www.ohchr.org/english/>

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) International Humanitarian Law (IHL) web database: <http://www.icrc.org/ihl>

## **The Major Players**

### *World Trade Organization (WTO)*

The World Trade Organization is the only international entity that sets rules and regulations determining the standards and limits of trade between states. The organization's work is based on the WTO agreements, a set of trade rules signed and ratified by a majority of trading countries. Many of the WTO's policies are extremely controversial, eliciting large scale protests over such issues as agricultural subsidies. For more information on this important international organization visit the website: [www.wto.org](http://www.wto.org)

### *International Financial Institutions (IFIs)*

International Financial institutions are large international banks that have social missions to help developing countries fund projects and initiatives (health, infrastructure, education..etc.) that contribute to development. The World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are the two most prestigious and powerful financial institutions, also called Bretton Woods Institutions. The WB and IMF were both created at the 1948 Bretton Woods Conference with the mission to help reconstruct Europe after World War II. Since then their policies have developed along the lines of the 'Washington Consensus' philosophy, which emphasizes the role of the open market and minimizes government 'interventions' in social spheres. There are also a plethora of regional and national financial bodies that play roles in development.

### *United Nations (UN)*

The United Nations is the most prestigious multilateral organization in the international system. Based on the former League of Nations and the UN Charter signed and ratified in 1945, the United Nations is comprised of six core organs: the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice, the Trusteeship Council, the Secretariat, the Security Council and the General Assembly. The 192 member states of the UN work to uphold human rights, formulate policies, address crises and solve conflicts within a diplomatic forum. The UN also has several different agencies, each with its own mandate to address various global issues (UNICEF, UNIFEM...etc). For more information on the UN visit:

[www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

### *Official Development Assistance (ODA)*

Official Development Assistance, also called development aid, foreign aid and international aid, is financial assistance given to developing countries (through governments or intermediaries, projects, communities...etc.) by the governments and financial institutions (IFIs) of developed countries. A majority of ODA is given specifically through bilateral government development agencies that play a major role in the field of international development. These include: the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and France's Agence Francaise de Developpement (AFD).

### *Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)*

The term 'non-governmental organization' was coined in the UN Charter (Article 71, Chapter 10) where organizations that are not affiliated in any way with member states, or states in general, are allowed a consulting role to the UN. Since then (1945) the role of NGOs has developed and many more organizations have been created. They range from small local, community-based organizations to huge international organizations with large amounts of resources and a variety of missions. In 2001 there were an estimated 40,000 internationally operating NGOs in the world, the largest being the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. For more history and interesting facts on NGOs visit: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NGO>

### *The Group of Eight (G8)*

The G8 is an international forum for the governments of the United States, Canada, the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Russia, the economies of which, when combined, make up 65% of the global economy. The G8 meet annually at the G8 Summit, and work together to conduct research and policy analysis. The current controversial topic on the G8 agenda is debt relief for developing countries. For more information visit:

[http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic\\_issues/group\\_of\\_8/what\\_is\\_the\\_g8.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/group_of_8/what_is_the_g8.html)

<http://www.makepovertyhistory.org/edinburgh/>