

Development crises

I need to understand what human development is, how it can be measured, what interruptions ('shocks') and damage ('reversals') to it look like, and the methods that people are using to a) reduce the risk of development reversals or b) reduce the impact of shocks when they can't be avoided. And then look at who is doing what and think about how we might do more to help this work.

First, human development. Wikipedia is [surprisingly insightful](#) (ed: not really - it's been lifted from the UNDP website) about this – "Development is ... about expanding the choices people have, to lead lives that they value and improving the human condition so that people will get the chance to lead full lives. And it is thus about much more than economic growth, which is only a means - if a very important one - of enlarging people's choices"... "The most basic capabilities for human development are to lead long and healthy lives, to be knowledgeable, to have access to the resources and social services needed for a decent standard of living and to be able to participate in the life of the community. Without these, many choices are simply not available, and many opportunities in life remain inaccessible".

So it's not just about money, drugs and food then (and no, I didn't think that it was). There's a lot about the value of people there, and the right of all of us to more than just basic subsistence survival. Which means thinking less in terms of individual vulnerability and starving kids and more about resilience and healthy communities that have the resources to make good decisions and survive shocks with help rather than imperial-style handouts.

The UN has two (at least) main measurements for development: the Human Development Index ([HDI](#) : life expectancy, literacy, education, standard of living and GDP) and Human Poverty Index (HPI: gaps in 'long and healthy life', 'knowledge' and 'decent standard of living'). These all got rolled up into the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)), a commitment by the UN to reach 8 major development goals by 2015.

So a development reversal would theoretically be something that reverses progress in one or more of these areas. A quick Google for "development reversal" shows the main source of information on these to be the annual [UNDP Human Development Reports](#). And from a quick skim, the 2010 report has a lot of useful background in it that I really need to spend some time reading in depth.