

Dilemmas of Foreign Aid: Debating U.S. Policies



THE CHOICES PROGRAM

Explore the Past... Shape the Future

History and Current Issues for the Classroom

WATSON INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
BROWN UNIVERSITY WWW.CHOICES.EDU

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The Choices Program develops curricula on current and historical international issues and offers workshops, institutes, and in-service programs for high school teachers. Course materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.

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Introduction: What is the Purpose of Foreign Aid?

In January 2010, much of the world tuned in to witness the devastating aftermath of an earthquake in Haiti. Over 230,000 people lost their lives and entire communities were destroyed. Haiti, one of the poorest countries in the world, had little in terms of infrastructure, government, or supplies to confront the crisis. In the weeks following the earthquake, individuals, governments, private companies, and nonprofit organizations around the world contributed to the relief efforts. The United States government committed \$3 billion in aid.

Years later, people in Haiti still face daily reminders of the earthquake's destruction. As of December 2012, 360,000 Haitians remained in camps, and 1.5 million faced extreme food shortages. Despite the enormous funding poured into earthquake relief efforts, Haitians have expressed their discontent with delays in reconstruction and a lack of communication between the international community and local leaders. Large amounts of funding remain unused due to delays in decision making. At the same time, the U.S. government and other agencies have provided food, critical medical supplies for treating cholera, and construction equipment.

The situation in Haiti reveals some of the complex issues surrounding the use of foreign aid. These issues raise important questions about the United States' relationship with other countries and the role of foreign aid in resolving global problems. When should the United States provide aid to other countries? Is foreign aid a one-time investment, or an ongoing commitment? Can the U.S. government guarantee that foreign assistance will produce positive outcomes?

In the case of the earthquake in Haiti, the U.S. government provided humanitarian aid. But what about when the United States provides assistance to foreign militaries, economies, or long-term development projects? These cases also present difficult challenges, and raise questions about how the United States provides foreign aid.

The recent economic crisis has led to debates surrounding how the U.S. government should spend the taxes it collects. When it comes to decreasing government spending, studies show that the U.S. public is more willing to cut foreign aid than any other part of the budget. This might be due to a common misconception among U.S. citizens that foreign assistance is more than a quarter of the federal budget. In fact, federal spending on foreign aid programs accounts for less than 1 percent of the budget.

In this reading, you will take a look at the U.S. role in the world—in particular, at the direction of U.S. foreign aid policy. Part I identifies the types of aid, key organizations, and debates that drive U.S. foreign assistance policies. Part II contains case studies that examine four U.S. foreign aid programs and explore some of the issues and dilemmas behind each. After you have finished the reading, you will be asked what types of foreign aid policies you think the United States should pursue.

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TEACHER RESOURCE BOOK

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Data Analysis: Tracking the Millennium Development Goals

Objectives:

Students will: Analyze statistics on the Millennium Development Goals.

Compare global and regional data on extreme poverty.

Required Reading:

Students should have read the Introduction and Part I of the reading in the student text and completed “Study Guide—Introduction and Part I” (TRB 5-6) or “Advanced Study Guide—Introduction and Part I” (TRB-7).

Supplemental Materials:

A playlist with videos describing extreme poverty and aid programs focused on eradicating poverty can be found at: <http://www.choices.edu/foreignaidmaterials>.

Handouts:

“Millennium Development Goal: Reduce Extreme Poverty” (TRB 9-10)

In the Classroom:

1. Reviewing the MDGs—Have students recall what they learned about the Millennium Development Goals in Part I of the reading. Which organization coordinates the Millennium Development Goals? What are some of the MDGs? How are countries and institutions working to eradicate poverty, promote gender equality, and combat malaria, among other goals?

Note: You may want to explore the MDG website with your students for information not covered in the student text. <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

2. Data Analysis—Divide students into small groups and distribute the handout, “Millennium Development Goal: Reduce Extreme Poverty.” Explain to students that they will be using graphs to examine data on the first Millennium Development Goal—reducing

extreme poverty by half. Remind students to examine all parts of the graph to get a complete picture of what the figures represent.

3. Sharing Conclusions—Bring the class back together after students have completed the worksheet. What were students’ overall impressions of the data? What do students think about defining extreme poverty as living on less than \$1.25 a day? Were students surprised by the differences in poverty between 1990 and 2010? How so? Did Figure 1.2 alter how students viewed the information presented in Figure 1.1? In what regions has relatively little progress been made to eradicate poverty? Why do students think this is the case?

Tell students that since extreme poverty has been tracked for the Millennium Development Goals, the number of people living in extreme poverty has decreased by 700 million. Still, 1.2 billion people remain in extreme poverty, living on less than \$1.25 a day. Do these statistics strike students differently than the proportions provided in the graphs? How so?

Now have students consider the larger debate surrounding the Millennium Development Goals. What opportunities and challenges exist when the international community coordinates to tackle global issues? Are there certain goals students believe are more difficult than others to achieve? Why? Have students imagine they are country representatives to the United Nations. How might their perspectives on funding the MDGs or prioritizing certain goals over others differ by country? For example, how might the perspective of the United States differ from that of a country in Sub-Saharan Africa or Latin America?

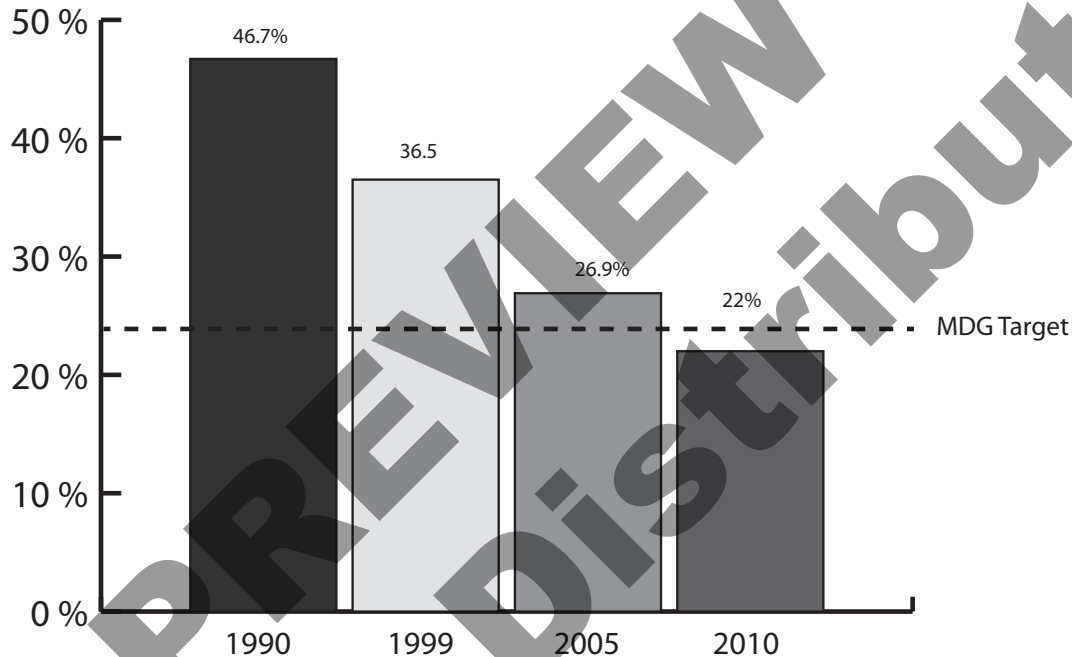
Homework:

Students should read Part II of the reading in the student text and complete “Study Guide—Part II” (TRB 15-16) or “Advanced Study Guide—Part II” (TRB-17).

Millennium Development Goal: Reduce Extreme Poverty

Instructions: The objective of Millennium Development Goal 1 is to reduce extreme poverty by half between 1990 and 2015. Examine the data in Figures 1.1-1.2, and answer the questions that follow.

Figure 1.1—Proportion of People Living in Extreme Poverty in the Developing World¹

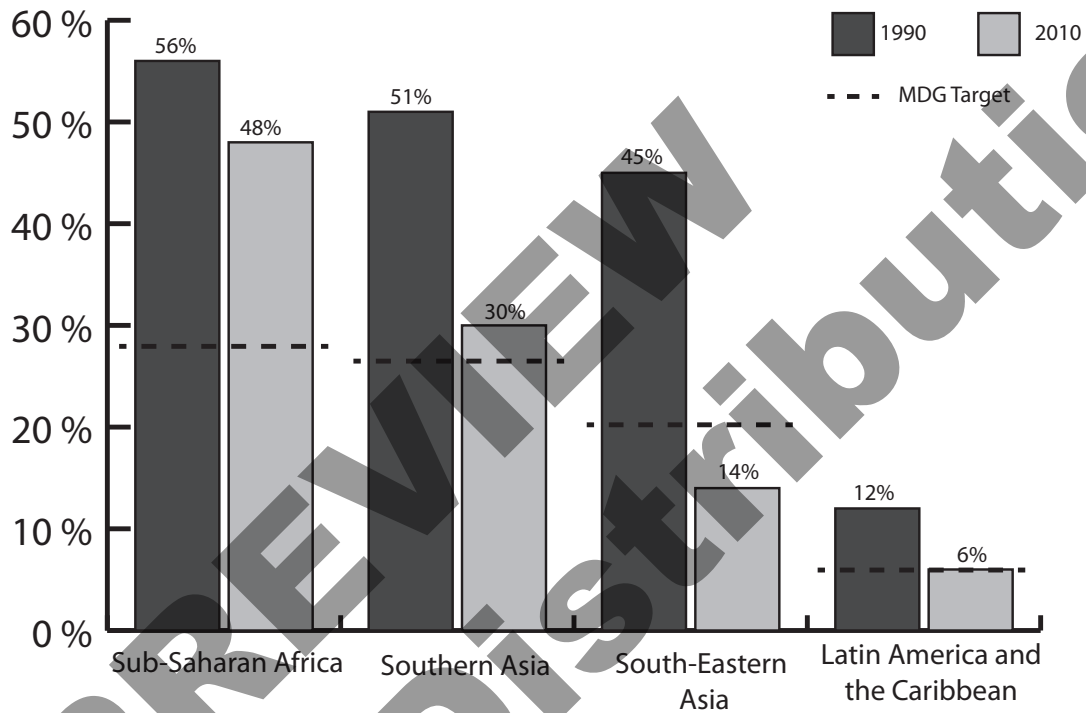


Data from the Millennium Development Goals Report, 2013.

1. The United Nations defines extreme poverty as living on less than \$1.25 a day. The MDGs track “developed” and “developing” regions. The following developing regions are included in the graph: Sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia, South-Eastern Asia, Eastern Asia (China), Latin America and the Caribbean, Western Asia, and Northern Africa.

1. Based on the information from this graph, how is extreme poverty defined?
2. By approximately what percentage did extreme poverty decrease...
 - a. between 1990 and 2005?
 - b. between 2005 and 2010?
3. According to the graph, has the international community met Millennium Development Goal 1?

Figure 1.2—Proportion of People Living in Extreme Poverty by Region



Data from the Millennium Development Goals Report, 2013.

1. Between 1990 and 2010, how much did extreme poverty decrease in South-Eastern Asia?
2. Between 1990 and 2010, how much did extreme poverty decrease in Sub-Saharan Africa?
3. For Southern Asia to meet its MDG target, how much more does extreme poverty need to go down?
 (*Hint: The MDG goal is to cut the 1990 extreme poverty rate in Southern Asia in half.*)
4. In which region(s) is the 2010 extreme poverty rate...
 - a. above the MDG target rate?
 - b. below the MDG target rate?
 - c. at the MDG target rate?