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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2002
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Norway still first, US sixth in human development

Despite financial crises, East Asian economies made major advances in the 1990s, but countries in Africa and the former Soviet Union slipped further behind

Manila, 24 July 2002 — The Human Development Report released data today that shows substantial progress over the last decades in the level of human development in most parts of the world. But the Report calls attention to tragic exceptions in Eastern and Central Europe, the former Soviet Union and sub-Saharan Africa, where many countries actually have a lower HDI today than they did at the start of the 1990s. In some cases, HDI is lower than in 1975. More than 60 countries, from different parts of the world, have lower income per head today than they did before 1990—and in 26 countries, incomes are lower than in 1980.

The annually updated Human Development Index (HDI) this year ranks 173 countries by a composite measure of life expectancy, education, and income per person. Norway remains at the top of the HDI, with Sweden, Canada and Belgium close behind, displacing Australia and outranking the United States. But the rankings between countries are very close: Australia, for example, has dropped from second to fifth place, but the difference between these ranks is miniscule.

Changes at the bottom of the rankings have also been very limited. Sierra Leone is still ranked last, with the bottom 24 countries on the Index all in sub-Saharan Africa.

However, there have been major changes in the rankings since 1990:

- At the top of the index, Norway has shot up six places since 1990, and Sweden and Australia have both risen nine places. The United States, Iceland, and France have all dropped four places over the period. Japan has fallen five and Switzerland six.

- In East Asia, many economies have made striking progress since 1990, despite the financial crises that hit the region toward the end of the decade. China has risen
furthest, with an increase of 14 places. Singapore and the Republic of Korea have both moved up eight places, Thailand has risen 10, and Malaysia has risen 12.

圈子 As many as nine countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have also risen five places or more since 1990, including Chile, Costa Rica and Panama.

圈子 At the same time, the pain of economic transition has taken its toll in many Eastern and Central European countries and the former Soviet Union. The Russian Federation and Ukraine have fallen by 20 places since 1990—and Moldova and Tajikistan have fallen by 30 or more places. Only Hungary and Poland buck the trend, moving up by five and eight ranks respectively since 1990.

“The data tells us two stories. First, there have been tragic reversals. Second, rapid progress is possible,” stated Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of UNDP, the agency that commissions the annual Report. “The eight Millennium Development Goals that were endorsed by 189 countries at the historic United Nations Millennium Summit nearly two years ago provide a framework in which all countries can move forward. But if the world is to achieve them, poor countries will have to redouble their commitment to social, economic and political reforms while rich countries have to make firm commitments to providing trade opportunities, increased aid and other resources.”
Global disparities in HDI

Human development index

ABOUT THIS REPORT: Every year since 1990, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has commissioned the Human Development Report (www.undp.org/hdro) 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 HDR argues that development is ultimately a process of enlarging people’s choices, not just raising national incomes.

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ABOUT UNDP: UNDP 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.