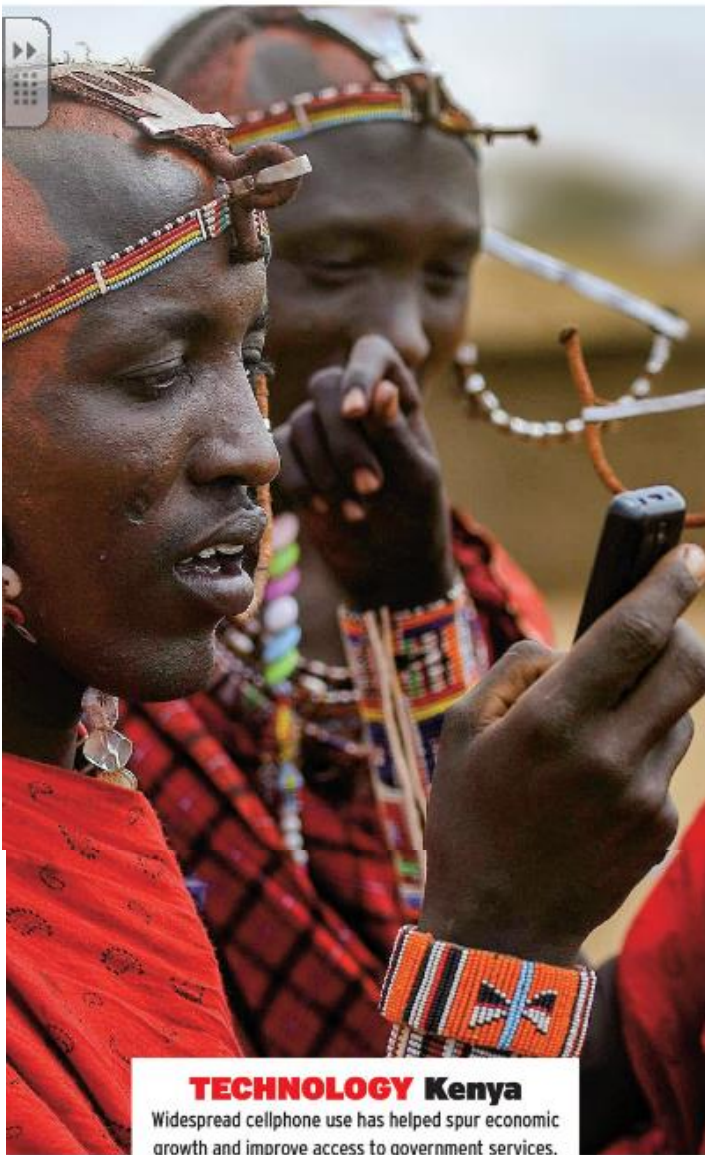


# OUT OF POVERTY

ANALYZE THE ARTICLE

Decades of economic growth and rising incomes are helping hundreds of millions of people worldwide escape extreme poverty **BY REBECCA ZISSOU**

 Watch a video about how global poverty has declined over the past 200 years.



**TECHNOLOGY Kenya**  
Widespread cellphone use has helped spur economic growth and improve access to government services.



**FARMING India**  
Improved agricultural practices mean greater crop yields and fewer people going hungry.

SIMON MAINA/UPGETTY IMAGES (KENYA); USAID/INDIA (INDIA)



**D**haki Wako Baneta knows what it's like to struggle to survive. The 26-year-old mother of four lives in a rural Ethiopian village where many people lack running water, access to electricity, and economic opportunities. For years, she'd wake up at 6 in the morning, milk her cows, and walk two hours along dusty roads to town to try to sell the milk. Most days, she'd spend hours in the scorching heat without making a single sale.

But Baneta's life has recently started to improve.

A few years ago, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) introduced her to a store owner in town who agreed to buy her milk on a daily basis. Now she has a steady income. She no longer worries about being unable to feed her children or pay for medicine, and she can spend more time with her family.

"My life is changing," Baneta says.

Stories like Baneta's have become increasingly common in recent years. Worldwide, more people are pulling themselves out of extreme poverty than ever before. According to the World Bank, the number of people living on less than \$1.90 a day—the global **benchmark** for extreme poverty—has dropped by more than half in the past 25 years. In 1990, an estimated 1.9 billion people, or 37 percent of the world population, lived in extreme poverty. Today, about 700 million, or 10 percent, do.

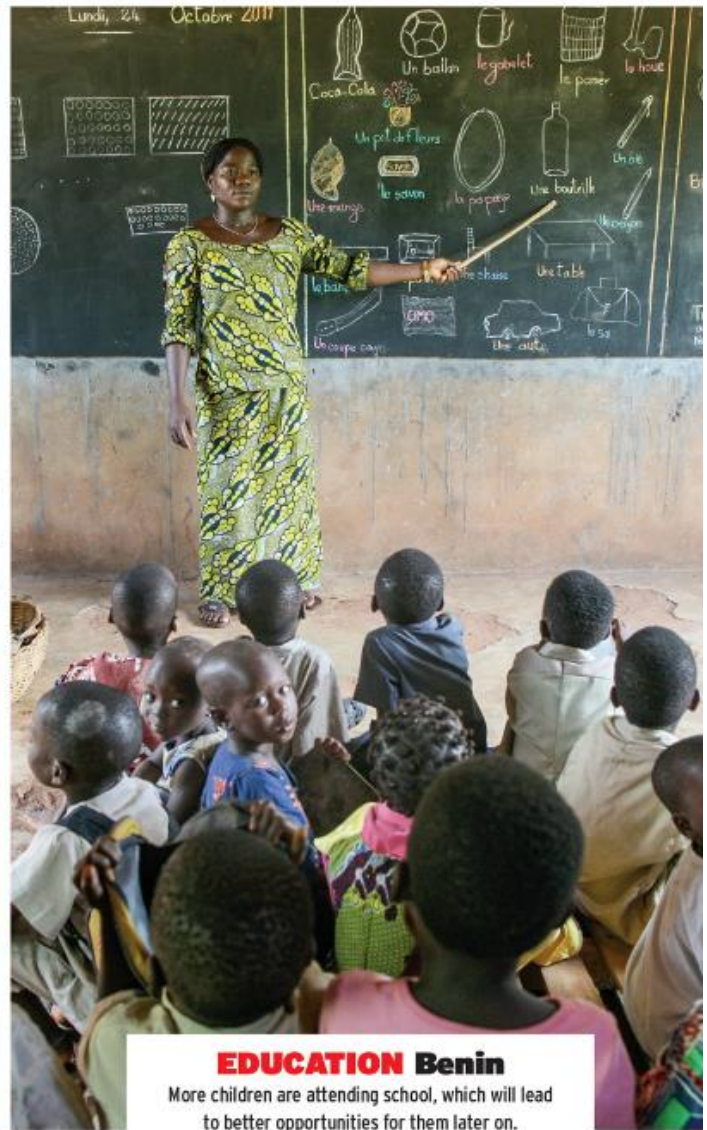
"What we've seen in the last two decades has been remarkable," says Aaron Roesch of USAID. "Never before have so many people been lifted out of poverty in such a short period of time."

Experts say that much of the growth can be attributed to rising economies around the world and huge advancements in technology and medicine. In recent years, governments, **humanitarian** groups, private companies, and the United Nations (U.N.) have also increased investments in education, health care, and



### **HEALTH CARE** Nicaragua

Vaccination campaigns have helped eradicate smallpox and bring other diseases like tetanus and measles under control.



### **EDUCATION** Benin

More children are attending school, which will lead to better opportunities for them later on.

ADRIAN BROOKS/IMAGEWISE/GETTY IMAGES (NICARAGUA); GODDING/LUG VIA GETTY IMAGES (BENIN)



infrastructure—roads, bridges, sewer systems, and electrical grids. Such projects help fuel economic growth and improve people's quality of life.

Now world leaders are working toward an ambitious goal: to eliminate extreme poverty altogether by 2030. Jim Yong Kim, the president of the World Bank, says the key to success lies in growing the economies of developing nations in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Those regions are home to 75 percent of the world's poorest people (see map, facing page).

Kim is optimistic that it can be done: "We are the first generation in human history that can end extreme poverty."

### Short, Miserable Lives

For thousands of years, most people lived short lives plagued by hunger, disease, poverty, illiteracy, and other hardships. Even as the rise of modern technology improved conditions in many nations, millions of people worldwide still lacked economic opportunities and were forced to do without necessities like clean water, safe housing, and medication.

But in the past several decades, strong economic growth and rising incomes in a few key regions have led to massive reductions in the number of people living in extreme poverty. The most dramatic example is China, the world's most populous country, with nearly 1.4 billion people.

In recent decades, the Communist country has been transformed from a poor, unstable nation into a global superpower—lifting more than 500 million Chinese from poverty in the process. In 1978, China loosened government control of its economy and encouraged foreign investment, which led to millions of new jobs, mostly in construction and manufacturing. As China's rural poor began moving in huge numbers to cities—where job opportunities are greater—they earned higher wages and had access to better schools and hospitals. Today, 4 percent of China's population lives in extreme poverty, down from 61 percent in 1990.

India, the world's second-most-populous country, with 1.3 billion people, has undergone a similar transformation.

## Then & Now

Many measures of global poverty show substantial improvement

Percentage of global population without access to clean water

**24%** **9%**  
1990 2015

SOURCE: U.N. MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Percentage of population in developing countries with cellphones

Less than **10%** **92%**  
1990 2015

SOURCE: U.N. MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Global rate of children dying before their 5th birthday

**90** **43**  
per 1,000 live births per 1,000 live births  
1990 2015

SOURCE: U.N. MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Number of school-age children worldwide not attending school (of elementary and middle school age)

**196** **124**  
million million  
2000 2013

SOURCE: GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION

**In 1990, 61 percent of China's population lived in extreme poverty. Now, only 4 percent do.**

In 1991, its government began making many of the same changes as China's, including encouraging international companies to do business there, and growth took off. Since 1993, its rate of extreme poverty has dropped by 25 percent.

In other parts of the world, humanitarian groups and the U.N. have made tremendous progress. Improved health care and vaccines mean that today deadly diseases like polio and measles are finally on their way out, the spread of malaria has been brought under control in many countries, and the number of HIV/AIDS cases is receding around the globe. Such changes help slash extreme poverty rates by creating a healthy, productive workforce.

Increased access to affordable technology is making a difference as well. In Africa, governments, aid organizations, and private companies are working together to finance electrical grids and telecommunications systems. A recent Pew Research Center poll found that 90 percent of people in Nigeria, a developing country with a rising economy, now own cellphones—about the same proportion as in the United States. In poor nations such as Ghana, phones are helping farmers and fishermen get weather reports, sell their goods to people in other towns, and learn new skills. In Kenya and Uganda, mobile banking is helping the poor manage their money better.

### Electricity, Not Candles

Around the world, reliable electricity and lightbulbs are positively influencing the lives of people like Teresia Olotai, a mother of six in rural Tanzania. For years,

her children had to do their homework by candlelight or kerosene lamp, which put their hut at risk of burning down. But in 2013, Olotai's town was connected to the energy grid as part of a USAID project. Now her children can safely study at night.

"The greatest challenge we faced . . . was the darkness in our houses," Olotai says. "The life of my kids will be better because of the electricity."

Yet despite such gains, hundreds of millions of people worldwide continue to live in extreme poverty, with India accounting for 30 percent of the total. Many of these people lack basic services like education and health care.

OPPOSITE PAGE: JIM NOMAHON (MAP); KELLEY LYNCH FOR USAID (ETHIOPIA)



# Extreme Poverty Around the World

Percentage of the population living in extreme poverty in selected countries



According to USAID, nearly two-thirds of the world's poorest people live in countries affected by violence and conflict. In Syria, for example, a brutal civil war has forced more than 11 million people to flee for their lives, often with little more than the clothes on their backs. The U.N. estimates that one in six Syrian refugee households in neighboring Jordan live in extreme poverty. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo,

which has been a war zone for decades, more than three-quarters of the population lives in extreme poverty.

Because the poor lack resources, says Roesch, they're especially vulnerable to extreme weather or natural disasters. A drought, a flood, or an earthquake can have devastating consequences, pushing families even further into poverty.

## Wiping Out Extreme Poverty

That's what happened to an 18-year-old named Israel in Nicaragua. Three years ago, his father passed away, forcing the teen to drop out of school and get a job on a coffee plantation. For a while, Israel made enough money to help his family survive. But then rising temperatures in Central America began destroying the coffee beans, so fewer workers were needed to harvest them.

Before long, Israel's income **plummeted**, and his family couldn't afford to buy school uniforms for his younger siblings. That left his mother, Maria, with an excruciating choice: "If I buy shoes or clothing, I don't have enough for food."

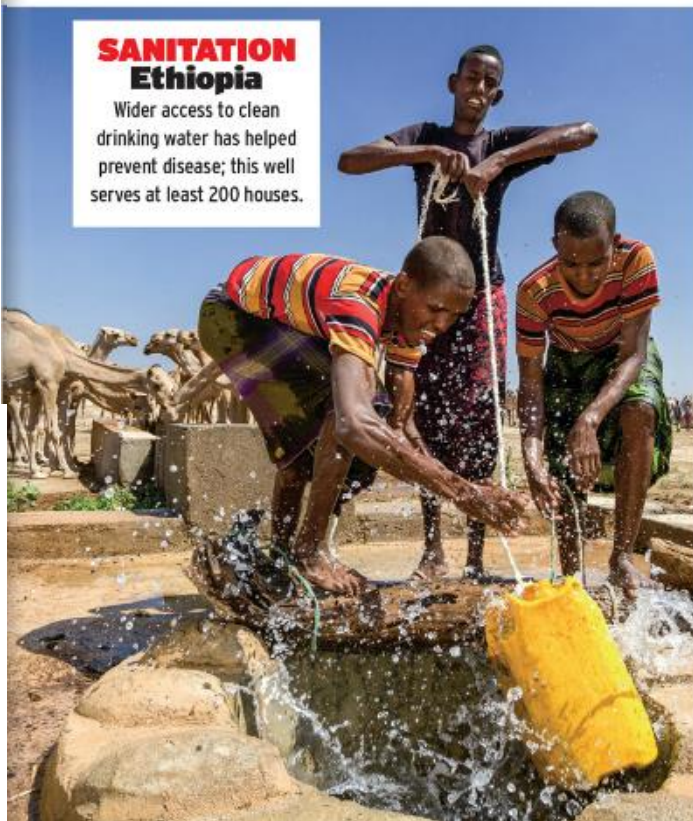
To reach the U.N.'s goal of wiping out extreme poverty by 2030, experts say, governments need to invest in health care, education, technology, and improving infrastructure. Nearly 1.4 billion people worldwide lack access to reliable electricity. Expanding access to education is critical too. According to the World Bank, each additional year of schooling in developing nations increases an individual's lifetime earnings by about 10 percent.

Despite the long road ahead, many experts are confident that we're on the right path.

"Extreme poverty is not inevitable. We can eradicate it," says Nick Galasso of Oxfam, an international aid group. "It's going to take a lot of hard work, but we can get there." •

## SANITATION Ethiopia

Wider access to clean drinking water has helped prevent disease; this well serves at least 200 houses.



## **“OUT OF POVERTY”**

### **Reading Assignment (HS.47)**

*Directions: Read the article, “OUT OF POVERTY.” On a separate piece of paper, write answers to the questions below using complete sentences.*

1. What is the current global benchmark for extreme poverty?
2. According to the article, where do the majority of the world’s poorest people live?
3. In which country has the rate of extreme poverty fallen from 61 percent to 4 percent since 1990?
4. What reasons are mentioned in the article as a cause for extreme poverty around the world to have been dropping?
5. Do experts think that extreme poverty can be ended? Why?
6. How do vaccines help lower the poverty rate? How does cellphone access help people escape poverty?
7. What is infrastructure? How might this be related to poverty?
8. What does the author say about the effect of natural disasters on poverty?
9. According to the article, what are some countries that have successfully lowered their extreme poverty rates in recent decades? How have they done it?
10. How has the civil war in Syria affected poverty rates outside its own borders? Analyze the author’s purpose in discussing the civil war in Syria.

*(Answering the all of the questions above correctly and in complete sentences could earn a **2.0**)*

11. What does the article say about education? What role do you think education can play in eradicating poverty? Why might lower poverty rates allow more children to attend school?
12. According to the article, how do experts define extreme poverty? Does this definition surprise you? Explain.

*(Answering all of the questions above correctly and in complete sentences could earn a **2.5**)*

13. In the article, Teresia Olotai, a mother in Tanzania, is quoted as saying “*The greatest challenge we faced . . . was the darkness in our houses.*” What do you think she means, and how do you think her life has changed since getting electricity?
14. Based on the article, what do you see as the key(s) to ending extreme poverty? Why?
15. Do you think the goal of eliminating extreme poverty by 2030 is realistic? Why or why not?

*(Answering all of the questions above correctly and in complete sentences could earn a **3.0 or above**)*