**AP Human Geography: Chapter 9 Development – Out of Poverty: Upfront Magazine, 04/25/16 by Rebecca Zissou**

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

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

SOURCE: THE WORLD BOOK

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 below)*. 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.

View the online video: ***200 Years That Changed The World*** whereSwedish statistician Hans Rosling in 2009 discusses the history of global income and health disparities.

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. 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. 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 **plummet**ed, 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.”

Questions to Answer in paragraph form:

1. What is the benchmark for “extreme poverty” and where do a majority of the world’s poorest people live?

2. According to the article, what are the reasons extreme poverty persists? What is the global trend?

3. Which countries have successfully lowered their extreme poverty rates and how did they accomplish this task?