

MORE OR LESS EQUAL?

BACKGROUND NOTES FOR TEACHERS

INEQUALITY

What do we mean by inequality?

In *More or Less Equal?* inequality refers to wide differences in a population in terms of their wealth, their income or their access to essential services such as health and education. These differences can occur between communities within the same country, or between countries. Inequality can also apply to unequal opportunities (life chances) and outcomes.

Many academic studies, including the Young Lives research, reveal that although a country's income (GDP) may grow and there may be signs that poverty is falling overall, this can disguise continued or worsening inequalities within the population. The study has revealed that there can be wide differences in levels of income, health and education between different ethnic groups, boys and girls, and between communities living in different locations, where people in urban areas fare better than those living in rural ones.ⁱ

Economic inequality can be measured in terms of wealth (what a household owns) and in terms of income (what a household earns). Inequality of opportunities refers to unequal distribution of 'life chances', such as unequal access to services like education and healthcare or exclusion from employment opportunities. Inequality of outcomes refers to the unequal distribution of variables such as wealth, income, or educational attainment.

Why is inequality a problem?

While some people argue that economic inequality may be necessary to spur growth and prosperity, extreme inequality causes problems. Economic inequality tends to slow the pace of poverty reduction, and when extreme, can even reverse it. A widening gap between rich and poor is now being seen in many countries all around the world. Seven out of ten people in the world live in countries where economic inequality has increased in the last 30 years. Taking the entire wealth of the planet and dividing it into two, almost half would go to the richest 1 per cent; the other half to the remaining 99 per cent. Inequality is increasing in the UK: the richest five families in the UK are now wealthier than the bottom 20 per cent of the population (12.6 million people).ⁱⁱ

Inequality challenges the innate sense of fairness most people feel, but there are other reasons why extreme inequality is a problem. Among them, the fact that extreme inequality – where wealthy elites dominate economic and political power – limits the opportunities poorer people have in life. Money, power and opportunities are concentrated in the hands of the few, resulting in the rich getting richer, while the poor get poorer (see 'Causes of inequality' section below). Furthermore, because different kinds of inequality are frequently overlapping and mutually reinforcing, rising inequality exacerbates the slow pace of poverty reduction. For example, a poor, elderly, disabled woman from an ethnic minority faces an interlocking set of obstacles to lift herself out of poverty.

Young Lives and inequality

The majority of the families in the Young Lives study are poor, or relatively poor. Since the children and their families were first interviewed in 2002, the economic situation in all of the countries in which they live has improved. Between 1995 and 2010, Gross National Income (GNI) per capita grew by 91 per cent in Ethiopia, 122 per cent in India, 61 per cent in Peru and 145 per cent in Viet Nam. Overall, the researchers have found that the Young Lives families also became less poor during this period. Many families have noticed an improvement in living conditions and infrastructure such as electricity, safe water, toilets and roads.ⁱ

However, the Young Lives team has also found that inequality has grown over this time. There is an increasing gap between rich and poor, rural and urban, boys and girls, and ethnic majority and minorities. In all four countries, researchers found that the same children often face multiple disadvantages based on where they live, what ethnic or caste group they come from, and whether they are girls or boys. As children get older, the differences between them increase, including those between boys and girls. Overall, the Young Lives study has seen how inequality undermines the development of human potential, with children from disadvantaged families quickly falling behind in terms of early learning and other outcomes.ⁱⁱⁱ

A whole range of variables such as income, healthcare, nutrition and education have been measured in the Young Lives study, but this resource largely focuses on inequalities in education, health and how children spend their time. *More or Less Equal?* also focuses on two other inequalities which affect children in the four study countries: gender and geographical location.

Gender inequalities

Gender and poverty

The majority of people living in poverty around the world are women. Women often have fewer resources, fewer rights and fewer opportunities to participate in decision-making processes than men. There are many, often complex, reasons why women are more at risk, such as domestic violence, discrimination and lack of education.

In 2009, it was calculated that women account for two thirds of the people living in extreme poverty and 60% of the working poor people in the worldⁱ. Women frequently own fewer assets than men, earn less money and do the vast majority of unpaid care work. There are also fewer women represented in politics and women are often legally discriminated against too. Women are still given a lower legal status than men in 128 countries around the world.^{iv}

The effect of gender on children's time use, education and health

Young Lives research has found that there are differences in the ways in which boys and girls spend their time. Typically girls spend longer caring for others and domestic tasks whereas boys spend more time in unpaid work for family farms or businesses. However, while the tasks undertaken tend to be different for boys and girls, the amount of time spent in paid and unpaid work is similar between boys and girls. They also spend a similar amount of time in school, but girls have less time for studying at home - a factor which may impede progress at school. Time use data from Andhra Pradesh tell a different story, with the burden of paid and unpaid work falling

disproportionately on girls who spend nearly an hour and a half more working per day.^v

The Young Lives research found that gender differences become more significant as children get older, but boys are not always advantaged over girls. For example, although girls might miss out on school because they are involved in domestic chores, looking after younger siblings or early marriage; older boys might miss out on school because of their potential to earn money from paid employment.^{iii v}

Similarly, early marriage for girls is common in some Young Lives countries and this can carry health risks for girls in pregnancy while their bodies are still not fully mature.

Overall, Young Lives findings do show that girls experience disadvantages but the research also challenges assumptions about gender inequalities, showing instead that gender is one of a series of inequalities that intersect with each other, including poverty, geographical location, ethnicity or caste status, which can impact negatively on both girls' and boys' life chances.

Causes of gender inequality

There are a range of local causes of gender inequalities, these can include:

- Parents may think that sons will be the main earners in the future and therefore that it is more important that they get a good education.
- Girls may get married earlier and be forced to drop out of school.
- Cultural expectations such as for girls to do the housework while boys go out to work.
- Parents may not want girls to take public transport to school on their own for safety and/or cultural reasons.
- A lack of sanitation facilities at a school may deter girls more than boys from going there.
- The underrepresentation of women in regional and national governments, leading to less influence in public decision-making.

Note that there are also global inequalities which can affect the local situation – see 'Global causes of inequality' below.

For further details and information about gender inequalities, see *Background notes on gender inequality* in English session 5 where learners hold a debate about gender and poverty. Find out more about Oxfam's work on women's rights here: www.oxfam.org.uk/what-we-do/issues-we-work-on/womens-rights

Urban and rural inequalities

The effect of geographical location on children's time use, education and health

Children living in rural areas spend more time on household work, caring responsibilities, and unpaid and paid work, with less time in school or studying. The difference in time spent in school and studying, and in paid work, is larger between children in urban and rural environments than between boys and girls.^v

Overall, Young Lives research found significant differences in children's opportunities and life

outcomes as a result of geographical location: children living in urban areas are generally doing better than those in rural settings, where poverty levels tend to be higher. One reason for this is that access to essential services such as healthcare and good schools is better in urban areas. Therefore not only are children healthier, they also progress faster in their education.

However, in all Young Lives countries, apart from Peru, poverty is falling in rural areas faster than in urban areas. Peru is the exception because rural families have migrated to the cities and they face many challenges as they settle into their new location such as finding work and developing support networks.¹

Causes of urban and rural inequalities

There is a range of factors that can cause people living in rural areas to be often (but not always) poorer than those in urban areas. These can include:

- Economic growth and the adoption of modern production techniques are normally stronger in urban areas, resulting in more opportunities for higher wages in cities.
- Trained professionals such as doctors, nurses and teachers often prefer to work in the cities where there are usually more opportunities, higher salaries and a higher standard of living.
- Many people in rural areas rely on farming for food and income. This makes them vulnerable to increasing land pressures as populations grow, and to rising temperatures and unpredictable rainfall. With climate change, extreme weather events such as heat waves, drought and floods, are occurring more frequently and becoming more severe.
- Rural communities are frequently isolated and people may have to travel far to reach the nearest school or health centre.
- Levels of infrastructure are often lower in rural communities, with reduced access to essential services such as safe drinking water, sanitation and electricity.

Governments may also under prioritize public spending and the provision of services in rural areas, or in the home regions of particular ethnic groups. Hence, rural-urban inequality can also be exacerbated by specific political exclusion.

Note that there are also global inequalities which can affect the local situation – see below.

Global causes of economic inequality

While the above challenges are the result of national government policy, the actions of a country's government may also be affected by global inequality. These external factors can exacerbate both in-country and between-country inequalities.

Historical causes

Many people believe that inequality is somehow inevitable, or is a necessary consequence of globalization and technological progress. However, the experiences of different countries throughout history have shown that deliberate political and economic choices can exacerbate or ease inequality.

The nature and relative influence of these choices may be contested, but there is no doubt that the last three hundred years have seen an enormous income (and broader development) gap open up

between richer and poorer countries. The historical causes of this polarization are a complex interplay between colonialism, politics, technology and institutions, with many of these factors still at play today, maintaining and exacerbating inequalities between countries. Having more advanced technologies and strong institutions such as secure property rights or a reliable legal system mean that businesses are more likely to invest for the long-term. As a result people are more likely to find jobs, and their government is able to secure more income from the collection of taxes. When this works well, it forms a virtuous circle, because this enables a government to spend on essential public services such as health and education that in turn reinforce economic growth and employment as people are able to do more productive and better paid jobs.

However the ideal of this virtuous circle of investment, tax and public services is often frustrated by politics, which is importantly influenced by global factors. One such challenge is the effects of colonialism which still leave multiple imprints on developing societies today – such as the exploitation of natural resources to the benefit of colonial trading powers, and now multinational companies, rather than local communities; the artificial creation of nation-state borders around groups of people that had no history of being a nation; or the imposition of European-style institutional structures without adaptation to local context. The power imbalance between countries that created and was greatly exacerbated by colonialism is still seen today in the disproportionate influence that ex-colonial powers continue to hold in major global institutions such as the UN, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

In more recent history, the debt crises of the 1980s and 1990s saw the international community coerce countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the former Eastern bloc into extreme policies of deregulation, rapid reductions in public spending, privatization, financial and trade liberalization, generous tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy. These so called ‘structural adjustment programmes’ damaged economies and worsened inequality. The legacy of these programmes in terms of underinvestment in health and education is still being felt in many poorer countries. For example, by 2000, inequality in Latin America had reached an all-time high, with most countries in the region registering an increase in income inequality over the previous two decades. It is estimated that half of the increase in poverty over this period was due to redistribution away from the poorest to the richest. In Russia, income inequality almost doubled in the 20 years from 1992, after economic reforms focussed on liberalization and deregulation.

Unregulated markets

When regulated, capitalism can be a very successful force for gaining prosperity with equality. Starting first in Europe and North America, then in Japan, South Korea and other East Asian countries, governments have used the market economy to help bring a dignified life to hundreds of millions of people. However, since the 1980s, economic ideology has been dominated by such over-optimism in the power of markets that some authors have labelled it ‘*market fundamentalism*’. Market fundamentalism maintains that sustained economic growth only comes from reducing government interventions and leaving markets to their own devices. However, without regulation, the market tends to polarize incomes in the same way as they polarize in the popular game of Monopoly where the incomes of people who possess assets such as Mayfair and Park Lane tend to rise faster than the incomes of people without assets who are reliant on passing ‘Go’ for their incomes. This difference in the growth of incomes between those with capital and those without drives inequality. It is an effect which has been seen in recent decades in the UK, where house

prices have risen faster than wages, making it harder for those without property to catch up. Wealth is then concentrated in the hands of the few, with a widening gap between rich and poor.

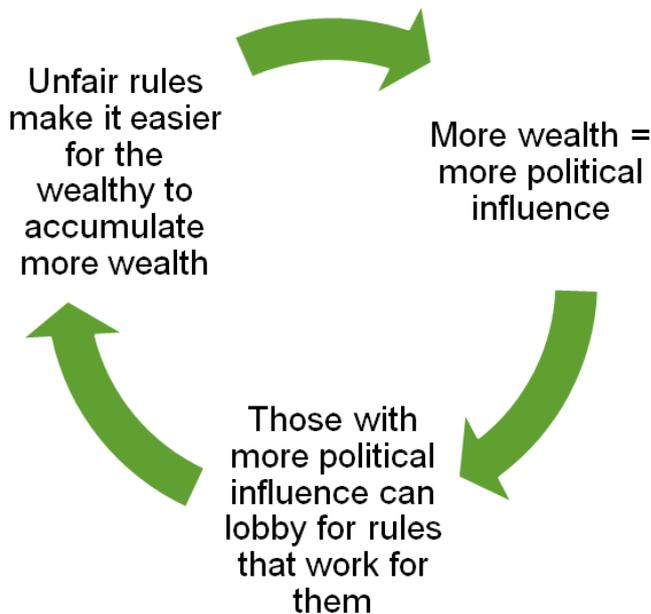
Many of today's richest people made their fortunes thanks to market fundamentalism. Mexico's Carlos Slim – who rivals Bill Gates as the richest person in the world – made his many billions by securing exclusive rights to the country's telecom sector when it was privatized in the 1990s. Since his monopoly hinders any significant competition, Slim is able to charge his fellow Mexicans inflated prices, with the costs of telecommunications in the country being among the most expensive in the world. He has subsequently used his wealth to fend off many legal challenges to his monopoly^{vi}.

The prominence of market fundamentalism at the international level undermines the ability of national governments to pursue the regulation and taxation that are needed to keep inequality in check. While at one level it is the country government's responsibility to ensure resources are shared fairly by its citizens, it is not operating in a vacuum and its policies can be affected by external factors. For example, in the so-called 'race to the bottom', transnational companies seek to invest in countries which offer the lowest taxes, lowest wages, least stringent labour rights and environmental regulations in order to maximise their profits. Therefore a country's government might feel under pressure to meet some of these requirements to avoid losing the potential business. Bribery and corruption can feature too. All this can mean that not only are workers paid less and working in poorer conditions but also that the country's government has less money to spend on public services such as health and education. Yet we know that spending on these services has a great capacity to reduce inequality.

Capture of power and politics by elites

Perhaps the most dangerous effect of inequality to the wellbeing of a society is the relationship between economic inequality and political inequality. When a country has very high levels of inequality, it means that a small elite are disproportionately wealthy, and therefore likely to have a disproportionate say in the way a country is governed. This forms a vicious circle. The elite are able to press the government to enact rules which favour their businesses and interests. This makes them richer, even more powerful and even more able to set rules which favour their businesses over others'. For example, in 2013 in the US, more companies engaged lobbyists to work on federal budget and tax issues than any other issues^{vii}.

Often these rules constrain decision-making by governments and have a bad effect on the poorer members of society. The gap between the rich and the rest drives this power imbalance which means that those who are already poor are in a weaker position for holding the government accountable, resulting in less investment in measures which reduce poverty such as education and health. Thus *economic* inequality can lead to *political* inequality where elites can influence how the economy evolves which may result in the perpetuation – and even polarization - of economic inequality.



Yet, as demonstrated by the behaviour of European governments following the Second World War, governments are in a position to do something about this. For example, they can reduce political inequality by narrowing the income distribution through progressive taxation, ensuring that no group has disproportionate influence. They can also use the proceeds of this taxation to fund universal access to health and education so that there is a level playing field of opportunity for all its citizens; and finally they can take steps to eradicate exclusion and better regulate markets to ensure that economic growth benefits the many rather than the few.

Note that inequality is not just a developing country issue – in fact some of the sharpest increases in inequality since 1980 have been seen in the US and UK. For example, in the US, 95% of the post-2008 financial crisis growth was captured by the richest 1%, while the bottom 90% got poorer. Meanwhile, in Spain, the world’s fourth richest man, Amancio Ortega, increased his fortune by several billion US dollars at the same time as 1 in 4 people were unemployed^{viii}.

For further information, see Oxfam’s ‘Even it up: time to end extreme poverty’

policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/even-it-up-time-to-end-extreme-inequality-333012

You might also like to refer to this Oxfam inequality campaign video:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=bL3MN8WLCQI&feature=youtu.be

Make it clear to your learners that this is Oxfam’s viewpoint on causes of inequality and that other people, organisations and institutions may have different opinions and ideas.

What can be done about inequality?

The continued rise of economic inequality around the world today is not inevitable – it is the result of deliberate policy choices. Governments can start to reduce inequality by rejecting market fundamentalism (see above), opposing the special interests of powerful elites, changing the rules and systems that have led to today’s inequality levels, and taking action to level the playing field by implementing policies that redistribute money and power.

In a world where most countries face widening income disparities and economic inequality is thriving, all four Young Lives countries and the UK face the challenge of making economic growth inclusive across geographical area, ethnic groups and gender.ⁱ The Young Lives project concludes that since inequalities have many dimensions, so too must the response. Therefore fair and impartial economic growth policies and free education and health services underpinned by social protection all have a role to play.ⁱⁱⁱ

Free public health and education services are a strong weapon in the fight against economic inequality because they benefit the poorest most. They lessen the effect of a wide income distribution by providing a ‘virtual income’ for the poorest people because they no longer have to pay for these services themselves.^{ix}

Furthermore, if unequal countries invest in health and education through raising funds from taxation where the rate of tax rises as income rises, there is a double benefit for poorer families. Firstly they gain by paying less (or no) tax and secondly they benefit from free health and education services – a virtual income which can exceed their own income.^{ix}

Investing in free education and health is also a proven way to tackle the gender inequality that keeps women and girls out of the classroom and prevents them from learning to read and write. Free public services are an investment in a fairer future for everyone, and prioritising these services is crucial for enabling a society to be run in the interests of the many rather than the interests of the privileged few.^{ix}

How Oxfam would like governments to tackle inequality

While Oxfam has long recognized poverty issues linked to between-country inequality, it is becoming increasingly apparent that injustice, extreme inequality and poverty will also persist if we do not address growing levels of in-country inequality too. Therefore Oxfam believes that solutions need to be sought both at international and national levels, with governments working together to tackle inequality by taking steps to eradicate exclusion and better regulating markets to benefit the many rather than the few.

Different countries have different challenges – not least because they start from different places – but Oxfam encourages all governments to reduce inequality by considering the following actions:

- Make tax fair, with rules that ensure everyone – including rich people and multinational companies – pays their fair share.
- Invest the missing billions lost by broken tax systems, as well as money from other sources, in healthcare, schools and other vital public services that make such a big difference to the lives of the poorest people.
- Ensure that hard work pays, which means secure jobs with fair wages for both women – whose work is often lower paid and less secure – and men, giving them the chance to work their way out of poverty. It also means fair deals for small farmers and others who survive by selling the fruits of their labours.

Make it clear to your learners that this is Oxfam’s viewpoint on solutions to inequality and that other people, organisations and institutions may have different opinions and ideas. Exploring these could form the basis of a useful debate.

DEVELOPMENT

What do we mean by development?

The difficulties around the concept of ‘Development’ are explained in a thought-provoking piece in ‘Through Other Eyes’^x:

“Development is a controversial concept. It is linked both to decolonisation processes and to the end of World War Two, when countries were classified according to their political/ideological alliances: First World (capitalist), Second World (communist) and Third World (unaligned nations). Therefore, the notion of development always implies a relationship with other countries and ideas about what ideal societies should look like.

The idea of a more developed country generally evokes the image of industrialised, affluent nations, material wealth, technology, modernity, democracy, scientific knowledge, civilisation and education. However, this image is constructed in relation to other nations and their peoples which are thought to be ‘backwards’, lacking these attributes and in need of assistance to catch up. But who defines these parameters, in whose name and for whose benefit?

This concept of development has been questioned in recent years from different perspectives. Some critics see development as the imperialism of knowledge, a continuation of colonialism, which imposes on the world a ‘modernity’ that it does not necessary want. Others see development efforts as political moves that will mainly benefit mainly the economies of ‘developed’ countries and create even more inequalities as the flow of knowledge and power is often one-way in the ‘development industry’. Some groups have tried to re-deploy the notion of development, taking into account the environmental costs of industrialisation and have advocated for ‘sustainable development’. Others say that a capitalist economic model is never going to be sustainable, so what we need is ‘sustainable contraction’ (as opposed to development)... and so the discussion goes on.”

How do we go about development?

As you are probably aware, this is a highly contested issue. Throughout the 20th century and continuing into the 21st century, governments have tried to develop the world’s poor countries. Development efforts have sought to increase national income, lift poor people out of poverty and improve their quality of living. However, people have had different ideas about how to best develop poor countries. For information about six different approaches to developing poor countries, modernisation, dependency, neo-liberalism, sustainable development, human development and post-development, see the Global Learning Programme website here:

www.rgs.org/OurWork/Schools/Teaching+resources/Key+Stage+3+resources/Global+Learning+Programme/Theories+of+development.htm

You may also be interested in the following document:

Critical Literacy in Global Citizenship Education, Global Education Derby,
osdemethodology.org.uk/keydocs/pdresourcepack.pdf

United Nations global goals for sustainable development

The last quarter of a century has seen massive changes that have helped fuel the fastest reduction in extreme poverty in human history. The rise of the emerging economies, improved policy making in many developing countries and an unprecedented commitment by world leaders to improve the lives of the world's poorest people have combined to create a situation where hundreds of millions have escaped hunger, disease and poverty. The United Nations millennium development goals (MDGs) were agreed by world leaders in the year 2000 and included a pledge to reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty to half of 1990 levels by 2015. This was met five years early in 2010. Even more impressively, the proportion of people living in poverty halved in the 15 years between 1996 and 2011. Such progress has encouraged world leaders that that they can finish the job by 2030.^{xi}

On 25th September 2015 the United Nations announced 'The Global Goals for Sustainable Development'. The sustainable development goals (SDGs) are a set of goals for the world that aim to make our planet fair, healthy and sustainable by 2030. The SDGs build on the progress and achievements of the MDGs. There are 17 Sustainable Development Goals which can be sorted into the seven themes: poverty; health and well-being; education, skills and jobs; a just world; sustainability; the environment; the global goals. Progress on the SDGs will be measured by governments every year, in order to help achieve them all by 2030. Challenges to achieving these goals remain, such as: climate change and the increasing vulnerability of poor people to extreme weather events; increased instability in large parts of the Middle East; the failure of national leaders and the international community to resolve long-running conflicts.^x

How have things changed in the four Young Lives countries since 2000?

Follow the links below for some useful info graphics about changes in the Young Lives countries since the study began. It is important to make it clear to your learners that, despite continued challenges for some children and their communities, the actions of many people working together have improved the lives of many children in the study.

- www.younglives.org.uk/files/data-visualisation-and-graphics/ethiopia-r4-findings
- www.younglives.org.uk/files/data-visualisation-and-graphics/india-r4-findings
- www.younglives.org.uk/files/data-visualisation-and-graphics/peru-round-4-findings
- www.younglives.org.uk/files/data-visualisation-and-graphics/vietnam-r4-findings-1

COUNTRY INFORMATION

Country context: Ethiopia

Ethiopia is Africa's oldest independent country but remains one of the world's poorest, although progress has been made in recent years. Child mortality has fallen, access to healthcare has improved and advances have been made in expanding primary education. The economy has experienced a trend of sustained economic growth following the reform programmes implemented since 1991 when the military government was ousted. In recent years, the economy has grown by around 11 per cent a year. More than 60 per cent of government spending now goes to what the Government calls pro-poor sectors, namely education, health, roads, water and agriculture. The economy is still largely dominated by agriculture, which is highly sensitive to rainfall: drought affects up to 13 million people. Ethiopia has low rates of urbanisation and most people make their living as subsistence farmers.

Despite significant investment to increase enrolment in primary schools, they are often poorly staffed and equipped. There are large differences in children's attendance between urban and rural locations, between boys and girls, and between and within regions. Overall adult literacy is low, at 31 per cent for rural and 74 per cent for urban residents.

Poverty is more concentrated in rural areas than in urban areas, but more rural households have been able to move out of poverty than urban ones. Time that children spend working is higher in rural areas than urban ones while time they spend on studying is higher in urban areas.

- One in every 13 children dies before reaching their first birthday, while one in every eight does not survive until they are 5 years old.
- Nearly one in two children under 5 are stunted (short for their age), 11 per cent are wasted (thin for their height) and 38 per cent underweight.

Country context: Peru

Peru is now considered a 'high human development' country, rich in natural resources. For the last decade, the economy has been growing at over 5 per cent each year. Even during 2009, when most of the world economy stagnated or deteriorated, growth continued in Peru, although at a slower rate.

But the country's strong economic performance has not been matched in terms of poverty reduction. Social expenditure is low, although there are a number of government programmes targeted at the poor. There are widening gaps between different sectors of the population, especially between Spanish-speaking and indigenous populations and between people living in urban and rural areas. Levels of poverty, infant mortality, maternal mortality and malnourishment are twice as high among indigenous groups as national averages; there are nearly three times more people living in poverty in rural areas than urban ones.

Migration from rural to urban areas is common. About 30 per cent of the population lives in the capital city, Lima, and 55 per cent lives on the narrow coastline (including Lima).

- The number of children who work is high. Boys are more likely to be employed in paid activities and girls more likely to work in the home.
- Of the 3.8 million Peruvians living in extreme poverty, 1.2 million are children.
- Children living in the poorest areas (city slums, the Andean Highlands and the Amazon rainforest) are ten times more likely to die before the age of five than children from the richest 20 per cent of families.

Country context: India

India is a country of huge inequalities, with the second-largest number of the world's billionaires but also 25 per cent of the world's poor. Over the last few years, India has seen impressive economic growth and even during the global recession in 2009, the economy grew at a rate of seven per cent of GDP. However, inflation is a big problem, especially for poor people.

- Malnutrition is more common in India than in sub-Saharan Africa.
- More children under 5 die from preventable diseases than in any other country.

Many of India's inequalities are tied to gender and caste: women and girls still face multiple discrimination. The caste system, which dates back many thousands of years, is still extremely important in everyday life, with what the Government calls Scheduled Castes (otherwise known as Dalits) and Scheduled Tribes (otherwise known as adivasis, India's indigenous peoples) being the most disadvantaged communities. This is despite the fact that discrimination on the basis of caste is now illegal, and the various measures which have been introduced to empower disadvantaged groups and give them better access to opportunities.

Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in southern India, have almost 85 million inhabitants between them, 7 per cent of the Indian population. The economy is still largely agricultural, although the joint capital of the two states, Hyderabad, is one of the leading centres of technology revolution. Andhra Pradesh was the role model for several new government initiatives during the 1990s to eliminate poverty and has made considerable progress.

- Rural poverty fell by over 35% between 1973/4 and 2004/5.
- Unlike in other Young Lives countries, poverty in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana is higher in urban rather than rural areas.
- 76 per cent of men in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana were literate in 2011 compared with 60 per cent of women. Only 66 per cent of girls aged 6-17 attend school, compared with 77 per cent of boys.

Country context: Viet Nam

There are 54 different ethnic groups in Viet Nam. For most, living conditions have steadily improved since the 1990s. Vietnam is now considered a ‘medium human development’ country. Average life expectancy is 75.

The government is gradually moving the country from being a centrally planned Communist state to a market-oriented economy. It has introduced a number of programmes to address poverty and social deprivation, and much foreign aid has also been targeted at poverty reduction.

The country was badly affected by the global recession in 2009. Food prices increased and exports went down. There are also widening gaps between rich and poor, and between the majority ethnic Kinh and the country’s many minority populations.

- The number of people living below the official poverty line continues to decline, but this masks a big gap in poverty rates between majority and minority groups.
- In 2008 only 9 per cent of the ethnic majority population was poor, in comparison to almost half of the ethnic minority population.
- Gender discrimination continues to undermine the well-being of women and children.
- Among under-5s, 5 per cent are underweight, 8 per cent are wasted (thin for height) and 32 per cent are stunted (short for their age).
- Enrolment rates at primary school are 97 per cent. Boys are more likely than girls to leave school before completing secondary level.

To find out about Oxfam’s programmes in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Viet Nam, follow these links:

www.oxfam.org.uk/what-we-do/countries-we-work-in/ethiopia

www.oxfam.org.uk/what-we-do/countries-we-work-in/india

www.oxfam.org.uk/what-we-do/countries-we-work-in/vietnam

www.oxfam.org/en/countries/peru

Sources

The source for all four country descriptions is *Changing Lives in a Changing World: Young Lives children growing up* (Young Lives, 2012).

ⁱ Round 3 Survey Reports for Ethiopia, India, Peru and Viet Nam (Young Lives, 2011)

ⁱⁱ A Tale of Two Britains (Oxfam, 2014)

ⁱⁱⁱ What Inequality Means for Children: Evidence from Young Lives (Young Lives, 2013)

^{iv} *Global Employment Trends for Women* (International Labour Organisation 2009)

^v Poverty and Gender Inequalities: Evidence from Young Lives (Young Lives, 2011)

^{vi} OECD (2012) ‘OECD Review of Telecommunication Policy and Regulation in Mexico’, OECD Publishing, cited in ‘Even it up: time to end extreme inequality’ Executive Summary (Oxfam, 2014)

^{vii} Wealth: Having it all and wanting more (Oxfam, 2015)

^{viii} Even it up: time to end extreme inequality’ (Oxfam, 2014)

^{ix} Working for the Many (Oxfam, 2014)

^x Andreotti, V and T. M. de Souza, L. M., *Learning to read the world Through Other Eyes*, Global Education, Derby, UK (2008)

^{xi} Inequality and the end of extreme poverty (Oxfam, 2015)