Development Ethics

- The task: provide a normative basis for guiding development decisions
- Development as a historical process
- Development as the result of policy choices
- A role for ethics
Normative issues

- Poverty--absolute and relative
- Inequalities of income and wealth
  - Property-derived inequalities
  - Urban-rural inequalities
  - North-South inequalities
  - Labor markets
- Failures of human development
  - Education, health care, nutrition
Normative issues (cont)

- Democracy
- Intergenerational justice: savings, environment, consumption
- Environmental goods
- Gender and development
Five questions

- What makes poverty such a bad thing?
- How should poverty alleviation figure in development goals?
- How ought we attempt to balance the goals and priorities of development?
Five questions (cont)

- What voice should the poor and powerless have in development choices?
- How should the present generation take the interests of future generations into account in development choices?
- How, and why, should we be concerned especially about the well-being of women in development?
Materials

- World Development Report
- Human Development Report
- Social Indicators of Development
  - www.ciesin.org/mep-bin/charlotte?state=START&event=start&protocol=sid&charlotte_dir=prod
Principles

- Capabilities and realizations (Sen, Nussbaum)
- Distributive justice (Rawls)
- Human rights (Shue, Beitz)
- Gender and Development
- Democracy
Capability and well-being

“In assessing the standard of living of a person, the objects of value can sensibly be taken to be aspects of the life that he or she succeeds in living. The various ‘doings’ and ‘beings’ a person achieves are thus potentially all relevant to the evaluation of that person’s living standard” (Sen 1985:29).
List of capabilities

- Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length.
- Being able to have good health, adequate nutrition, adequate shelter, choice in reproduction, and mobility.
- Being able to avoid unnecessary and non-beneficial pain and to have pleasurable experiences.
List (cont)

- Being able to use the senses, imagine, think, and reason; and to have the educational opportunities necessary to realize these capacities.
- Being able to have attachments to things and persons outside ourselves.
List (cont)

- Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one’s own life.
- Being able to live for and to others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings.
- Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals and the world of nature.
List (cont)

- Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.
- Being able to live one’s own life and no one else’s; enjoying freedom of association and freedom from unwarranted search and seizure.
- (Nussbaum, Women, Culture, and Development)
Distributive justice

First: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others. Second: social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone’s advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all. (Rawls, A Theory of Justice)
All human beings have a right to life. This right entails access to the minimal goods needed to satisfy basic human needs. If we are confronted with a group whose basic needs are not currently satisfied and if there are alternative plans that lead either to increased satisfaction of basic needs or to satisfaction of other persons’ non-...
Human rights (cont)

- … basic rights, we should choose the former.
The poor do not have a high level of basic-needs satisfaction. They therefore have a right to priority in development planning until their basic needs have been satisfied. Therefore development planning should give priority to improving the incomes flowing to the poor.
Gender and development

Data on mortality, nutrition, health status, and access to income indicate substantial and significant differences between men and women in many developing countries. Women are disadvantaged in their exercise of economic and political rights in many countries; ...
they are disadvantaged within the household in the domestic economy; and they are disadvantaged in many measures of well-being as outcome of social processes.
Equality

- equality of treatment with respect to basic social goods
- equality of life prospects
- equality of potential for realization of human capacities
- equality of basic human rights (political, social, economic) equal rights and freedoms
Democracy

- Democracy is a good thing, both intrinsically and instrumentally.
- Intrinsically, it is a necessary component of the ability of individuals to live freely and autonomously.
Democracy

Instrumentally, it is an institutional guarantee that the policies and laws created by a government will have a reasonable fit with the fundamental interests of the people.
Thus democracy is a central determinant of the quality of life, and a central element in the ability of men and women to live freely and autonomously as human beings. This is no less so in poor and developing countries than it is in the North and the West.
Gini coefficient

\[ G = \frac{A}{(A+B)} \]

Percent of income

Percentile of population
Income distribution
Three strategies

- **LF**  laissez-faire growth: choose those policies and institutional reforms that lead to the most rapid growth: unfettered markets, profit-maximizing firms, minimal redistribution of income and wealth.

- **PF**  poverty-first growth: choose those policies and institutional reforms that lead to economic growth favorable to the most rapid growth in the incomes flowing to the poorest 2 quintiles

- **WF**  immediate welfare improvement: direct as much social wealth as possible into programs that immediately improve the welfare of the poor (education, health, food subsidies, housing subsidies)
Three models