

The IOC and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) share the same ideal: to promote human dignity and help improve the well-being of society. The Olympic Movement can make a significant contribution to human development, joining the UNDP in its work to help the deprived around the world, by encouraging the practice of sport and calling upon its thousands of volunteers.

Many initiatives have been launched in cooperation with the National Olympic Committees to fight poverty and social exclusion since the IOC and UNDP signed a cooperation agreement in 1996. On an international level, the IOC and UNDP launched the “Olympic athletes’ pledge against poverty” during the Games of the XXVI Olympiad in Atlanta. Over 5,000 athletes expressed their commitment and determination to marshal the nec-

Consumption and human development

essary energy and resources to alleviate social inequality and promote solidarity and human development, to the best of their abilities. This is a direct reflection of the concept of Olympic Solidarity, which is behind the technical and financial support the IOC provides to the NOCs.

It is with this in mind that we have chosen to reproduce part of the latest Human Development Report, pub-

lished by UNDP in September. This annual report explains how the human situation in the world has developed, highlighting the key aspects for understanding and resolving the problem of poverty and the blatant inequalities that are a feature of our society. This year’s report focuses primarily on the effect of changes in consumption patterns on human development.



The “Appeal of the Olympic Athletes against Poverty”, at the Games in Atlanta in 1996.



Changing today's consumption patterns for tomorrow's human development

World consumption has expanded at an unprecedented pace over the 20th century, with private and public consumption expenditures reaching \$24 trillion in 1998, twice the level of 1975 and six times that of 1950. In 1900 real consumption expenditure was barely \$1.5 trillion. The benefits of this consumption have spread far and wide. More people are better fed and housed than ever before. Living standards have risen to enable hundreds of millions to enjoy housing with hot water and cold, warmth and electricity, transport to and from work - with time for leisure and sports, and other activities beyond anything imagined at the start of this century.

How do these achievements relate to human development? Consumption is clearly an essential means, but the links are not automatic. Consumption clearly contributes to human development when it enlarges the capabilities and enriches the lives of people without adversely affecting the well-being of others. It clearly contributes when it is as fair to future generations as it is to the present ones. And it clearly contributes when it encourages lively, creative individuals and communities.

But the links are often broken, and when they are, consumption patterns and trends are inimical to human development. Today's consumption is undermining the environmental resource base. It is exacerbating inequalities, and the dynamics of the consumption-poverty-inequality-environment nexus are accelerating. If the trends continue without change - not redistributing from high-income to low-income consumers, not shifting from polluting to cleaner goods and production technologies, not promoting goods that empower poor producers, not shifting priority from consumption for conspicuous display to meeting basic needs - today's prob-

lems of consumption and human development will worsen.

But trend is not destiny, and none of these outcomes is inevitable. Change is needed - and change is possible.

In short, consumption must be shared, strengthening, socially responsible and sustainable.

- Shared. Ensuring basic needs for all.
- Strengthening. Building human capabilities.
- Socially responsible. So the consumption of some does not compromise the well-being of others.
- Sustainable. Without mortgaging the choices of future generations.

Human life is ultimately nourished and sustained by consumption. Abundance of consumption is no crime. It has, in fact, been the life blood of much human advance. The real issue is not consumption itself but its patterns and effects. Consumption patterns today must be changed to advance human development tomorrow. Consumer choices must be turned into a reality for all. Human development paradigms, which aim at enlarging all human choices, must aim at extending and improving consumer choices too, but in ways that promote human life. This is the theme of this report.

The 20th century's growth in consumption, unprecedented in its scale and diversity, has been badly distributed, leaving a backlog of shortfalls and gaping inequalities.

Consumption per capita has increased steadily in industrial countries (about 2.3% annually) over the past 25 years, spectacularly in East Asia (6.1%) and at a rising rate in South Asia (2.0%). Yet these developing regions are far from catching up to levels of industrial countries, and consumption growth has been slow or stagnant in others. The average African household today consumes 20% less than it did 25 years ago.

The poorest 20% of the world's people and more have been left out of the



Consumer waste.

consumption explosion. Well over a billion people are deprived of basic consumption needs. Of the 4.4 billion people in developing countries, nearly three-fifths lack basic sanitation. Almost a third have no access to clean water. A quarter do not have adequate housing. A fifth have no access to modern health services. A

fifth of children do not attend school to grade 5. About a fifth do not have enough dietary energy and protein. Micronutrient deficiencies 55 million in industrial countries. In developing countries only a privileged minority has motorized transport, telecommunications and modern energy. Inequalities in consumption are stark.

Globally, the 20% of the world's people in the highest-income countries account for 86% of total private consumption expenditures - the poorest 20% a minuscule 1.3%. More specifically, the richest fifth:

- Consume 45% of all meat and fish, the poorest fifth 5%.
- Consume 58% of total energy, the poorest fifth less than 4%.
- Have 74% of all telephone lines, the poorest fifth 1.5%.
- Consume 84% of all paper, the poorest fifth 1.1%.
- Own 87% of the world's vehicle fleet, the poorest fifth less than 1%.

How rewarding is today's pattern of consumption in terms of human satisfaction? The percentage of Americans calling themselves happy peaked in 1957 - even though consumption has more than doubled in the meantime.

Despite high consumption, poverty and deprivation are found in all industrial countries and in some they are growing. This year's Report presents a new index of poverty in industrial countries - a multidimensional measure of human deprivation, on the same lines as the human poverty index presented in Human Development Report 1997 for developing countries but more appropriate to the social and economic conditions of the industrial countries.

The new human poverty index (HPI-2) shows that some 7-17% of the population in industrial countries is poor. These levels of deprivation have little to do with the average income of the country. Sweden has the least poverty (7%), though ranked only thirteenth in average income. The United States, with the highest average income of the countries ranked, has the highest population share experiencing human poverty. And countries with similar per capita incomes have very different levels of human poverty. The Netherlands and the United Kingdom, for example, have HPI-2 values of 8% and 15%, despite similar income levels.

HPI-2 shows conclusively that under-consumption and human deprivation are not just the lot of poor people in the developing world. More than 100 million people in rich nations suffer a similar fate. Nearly 200 million people are not expected to survive to age 60. More than 100 million are homeless. And at least 37 million are without jobs, often experiencing a state of social exclusion. Many conclusions about deprivation apply to them with equal force.

Ever-expanding consumption puts strains on the environment - emissions and wastes that pollute the earth and destroy ecosystems, and growing depletion and degradation of renewable resources that undermines livelihoods.

The world's dominant consumers are overwhelmingly concentrated among the well-off - but the environmental damage from the world's consumption falls most severely on the poor.

The better-off benefit from the cornucopia of consumption. But poor people and poor countries bear many of its costs. The severest human deprivations arising from environmental damage are concentrated in the poorest regions and affect the poorest people, unable to protect themselves.

- A child born in the industrial world adds more to consumption and pollution over his or her lifetime than do 30-50 children born in developing countries.
- Since 1950 industrial countries, because of their high incomes and consumption levels, have accounted for well over half the increase in resource use.
- The fifth of the world's people in the highest-income countries account for 53% of carbon dioxide emissions, the poorest fifth for 3%. Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and Mexico are among the developing countries with the highest emissions. But with huge populations, their per capita emissions are still

tiny - 3.9 metric tons a year in Mexico and 2.7 in China, compared with 20.5 metric tons in the United States and 10.2 in Germany. The human consequences of the global warming from carbon dioxide will be devastating for many poor countries - with a rise in sea levels, Bangladesh could see its land area shrink by 17%.

Almost a billion people in 40 developing countries risk losing access to their primary source of protein, as overfishing driven by export demand for animal feed and oils puts pressure on fish stocks.

The 132 million people in water-stressed areas are predominantly in Africa and parts of the Arab states - and if present trends continue, their numbers could rise to 1-2.5 billion by 2050.

Deforestation is concentrated in developing countries. Over the last two decades, Latin America and the Caribbean lost 7 million hectares of tropical forest, Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa 4 million hectares each. Most of it has taken place to meet the demand for wood and paper, which has doubled and quintupled respectively since 1950. But over half the wood and nearly three-quarters of the paper is used in industrial countries.

The poor are most exposed to fumes and polluted rivers and least able to protect themselves. Of the estimated 2.7 million deaths each year from air pollution, 2.2 million are from indoor pollution, and 80% of the victims are rural poor in developing countries. Smoke from fuelwood and dung is more dangerous to health than tobacco smoke, but every day women have to spend hours cooking over smoky fires.

The global population is projected to be 9.5 billion in 2050, with more than 8 billion in developing countries. To feed this population adequately will require three times the basic calories

consumed today, the equivalent of about 10 billion tons of grain a year.

How people interact with their environment is complex. It is by no means simply a matter of whether they are poor or rich. Ownership of natural resources, access to common properties, the strength of communities and local institutions, the issue of entitlements and rights, risk and uncertainty are important determinants of people's environmental behaviour. Gender inequalities, government policies and incentive systems are also crucial factors.

In recent times environmental awareness has been increasing in both rich and poor countries. The rich countries, with greater resources, have been spending more on environmental protection and clean-up. The developing countries, though they have fewer resources, have also been adopting cleaner technologies and reducing pollution, as in China.

The world community has also been active on environmental problems that directly affect poor people. Such areas include desertification, biodiversity loss and exports of hazardous waste. For example, the Convention on Biological Diversity has near-universal signature, with over 170 parties. The Convention to Combat Desertification has been ratified by more than 100 countries. But the deterioration of arid lands, a major threat to the livelihoods of poor people, continues unabated.

And there are other immediate environmental concerns for poor people, such as water contamination and indoor pollution, that have yet to receive serious international attention. Global forums discuss global warming. But the 2.2 million deaths yearly from indoor air pollution are scarcely mentioned.

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