



my homeschool

Year Ten

Caring for All: The
Geography of
Global Wellbeing

By Jo Lloyd

My Homeschool – Year 10A – Caring for All: The Geography of Global Wellbeing

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Welcome to Students

Teenagers have such a capacity to do amazing things!

Often teens are shown as being selfish, always eating and sleeping, or simply just “hanging out” doing not much, but here at My Homeschool we know that this is simply not true for many teens. Rapidly becoming the adults who will become leaders, teenagers are interested in so many issues, current affairs, subjects and topics of discussion, including learning about the world’s most vulnerable.

During this semester you will be examining human wellbeing across the globe as you focus on aspects of social geography. While next semester you will dig deep into issues of environmental management in physical geography, for this one it is diving deep into the issues of inequality between places in relation to human wellbeing in an attempt to understand where people are suffering the most and why.

To help you better understand what is occurring on the ground in some of these countries you will be reading two books: one that focuses on India and the conditions some people live in within that country, and another which will take you to Africa and the country of Uganda. These will give you a glimpse into how people live, and one will show the powerful tool geography, particularly mapping, is.

Sure, some aspects you read about are going to show you how your life is vastly different to many others around the world, but, as an engaged and informed young adult, you are ready to tackle this.

Be prepared to start to more fully appreciate all the opportunities you have when you read of the experiences of others. (You may hug your parents just a little closer when you read of one boy’s experience on the streets of Calcutta.) Also, be prepared to consider how all the opportunities you have position you well to respond to what you are learning. Be encouraged to consider how you can play a part in helping the world’s poorest and most vulnerable and remember that being well-informed is an important first step. So, read, absorb and consider the geographies of human wellbeing and start thinking about how all citizens of the world could improve their standard of living to make a better world for all.

Lesson 1: Defining Human Wellbeing

Have you given much thought about caring for all the people around the world? Did you think it would be a topic you would examine in Geography? You would know by now that two main strands of Geography are Physical Geography and Social (or Cultural) Geography. This semester the focus is more on Social Geography, specifically looking at human wellbeing, so, to start, we need to define some terms.

When geographers use the term **human wellbeing** they are referring to the overall standard of living and health of a population. It is about the quality of life of a population and is a broad term. Used by geographers, human wellbeing is a standard used to compare regions and nations, using both qualitative (subjective) measures of how people perceive the quality of their life, and quantitative (objective) measures. While human wellbeing as a standard can be measured in many different ways, some common quantitative indicators used include:

GDP (Gross Domestic Product): A measure of a country's economic wealth, representing the total market (or financial) value of all the goods and services in that country, generally on a yearly basis and sometimes represented per capita (meaning GDP for a country is calculated and divided by the country's total population to determine the per capita amount).

IMR (Infant Mortality Rate): The number of deaths per every 1,000 babies for children under one year old.

Literacy Rates: The percentage of a population in a given age group that are able to read and write.

Life Expectancy Rates: The age to which a person can be expected to live within a nation (based on the average age at which people die).

Gross National Income: The total income of all citizens of a nation, which reflects the relative economic strength of a country. This varies from GDP because it includes income from investments and income generated overseas, not just local goods and services. Like GDP, it is generally given on a yearly basis and can be presented as per capita too.

Yet, you will appreciate that measuring the human wellbeing of a nation or region goes beyond just these indicators because these don't include aspects such as shelter and housing, access to clean water, appropriate sanitation and health care services; it shows little about educational standards, poverty

or malnourishment, let alone personal safety and security, civic representation, stability and transparency within government institutions, safe access to places of worship, and employment rates. As you can appreciate, measuring human wellbeing isn't an easy task for geographers!

One indicator that is used by many government agencies and organisations is the **Human Development Index**. This index, often shortened to the **HDI**, is a composite index and is compiled by the United Nations Development Programme. It measures the average achievements of a country in three different areas:

- Life expectancy at birth (reflecting a long and healthy life);
- Education (a combination of mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling and included to reflect the knowledge of the country); and
- The Gross National Income (used as a reflection of the living standards).

Each of the different measures is ranked in order and a country with a very high life expectancy will score +1 and a country with a low score will be close to 0. The same is done for the two other measures and a final rank order is achieved for the countries of the world. The UN releases the HDI every year and in 2019 Norway was ranked as the country with the highest score, with Switzerland and Ireland coming close behind. Australia was rated in the top ten countries, with Singapore, New Zealand and the United States of America making it into the top twenty, while African countries dominated the ten lowest ranking nations.

While there are some criticisms about the way the HDI is generated, you will notice how the HDI offers a fuller picture of wellbeing in a nation compared to GDP. Before the HDI was first published in 1990 it was the GDP that was predominantly used to determine the health of a country. However, this was never intended to measure the quality of life or measure human wellbeing. GDP cannot accurately reflect the disparity in the distribution of wealth, even if it is shown as a per capita basis, because that is purely on an average of the total population. What social geographers want to know about the human wellbeing of a nation goes beyond this: they want to see indicators of people's health status, their happiness and social connectedness, their education and personal security, along with a range of other measures that don't simply focus on monetary aspects.

One reason why geographers rely on statistical and quantitative sources when measuring aspects of human wellbeing is because they provide an objective

basis upon which to compare countries. They allow us to see where the needs are the greatest. They also allow us to see the global inequalities.

In 2020 international non-government aid agency Oxfam released their *Time to Care* report. This highlighted how the 2,153 billionaires in the world together hold more wealth than a population of 4.6 billion people. That is, those 2,153 billionaires have more wealth than 60% of the world's population. This figure shows the staggering inequality in the world and you will explore this theme of inequality throughout the semester. Oxfam also highlighted that 22 billionaires alone held more wealth than all the women in Africa and the huge number of hours girls and women give to unpaid work across the world.

However, while this details the objective/quantitative measures that can be used, about subjective/qualitative indicators, which are notoriously hard to measure and quantify? These qualitative aspects highlight:

- the treatment of human rights in a nation,
- the way the country is governed,
- whether citizens are represented well and can participate in their governance,
- aspects of society, such as how people can connect and participate in society,
- access to leisure and entertainment activities,
- the quality of the environment that people live within, and
- the capacity of individuals and groups to represent and exert their rights.

As you can appreciate, these are far more difficult to rate within an indicator like GDP, and therefore harder to measure to see if there is any improvement. Yet, despite the challenges of being able to measure and track progress on all of these aspects, in the year 2000, following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, 191 countries and more than 20 international organisations joined together with the goals:

1. To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
2. To achieve universal primary education;
3. To promote gender equality and empower women;
4. To reduce child mortality;
5. To improve maternal health;
6. To combat HIV, AIDS, malaria, and other diseases;
7. To ensure environmental sustainability; and
8. To develop a global partnership for development.

These goals were called the Millennium Development Goals and were to be achieved by 2015. Many of these goals were not been met by that date, and so to continue the progress and initiative to improve human wellbeing across the globe, the Sustainable Development Goals were adopted in 2015 and are designed to be achieved by 2030. There are seventeen Sustainable Development Goals and you can read these in the Complementary Links for this lesson. These goals represent an approach to improving human wellbeing that is based on both quantitative and qualitative measures and give a great idea of what goals based on a composite measure can look like.

Complementary Links

Please examine the Complementary Links for this lesson to better understand some of the indicators used to measure human wellbeing. Also, there is information included in the Complementary Links to help you complete your Notebook entry for this lesson.

For those interested in looking further into the *Time to Care* report, it is included in the Complementary Links too.

Notebook Entry

Understanding and defining terms is important in all subjects, including Geography. For your Notebook entry please include a list of the key terms related to this lesson and explain what you understand each to mean. Be sure to include:

- Human Development Index
- Gross Domestic Product
- Infant Mortality Rate
- Literacy Rates
- Employment Rate
- Absolute (Extreme) Poverty
- Relative Poverty
- Malnutrition
- Infant Mortality Rate
- Life Expectancy
- Gross National Income
- Developed world
- Developing country
- Maternal mortality
- Sanitation
- Gross National Product
- Millennium Development Goals
- Sustainable Development Goals