Chapter 16: Understandings of Quality of Life

Chapter Focus

Should I, as a citizen, respond to globalization? In this first chapter of Part 4, you can begin your investigation into this Main Issue by exploring various understandings of quality of life. What are the indicators of quality of life? What factors influence how we define quality of life? Should quality of life be the same for everyone? Or does quality of life depend on a society's values and beliefs?

Today, global communications technologies allow us to see first-hand the quality of life experienced by different peoples around the world. We know that, as Canadians, we are fortunate to have an extremely high quality of life. We also know that many of the world's citizens are not as fortunate. How can governments improve the quality of life for billions of people around the world? How can communities and individuals improve quality of life? You have the opportunity to think about these and other questions as you explore the issue of globalization and quality of life.

Chapter Issue

In this chapter, you will have an opportunity to examine various understandings of quality of life and the impact quality of life has on individuals and communities in many parts of the world. These examples will help you explore the Chapter Issue: To what extent does globalization affect quality of life?

Key Terms

- standard of living
- quality of life
- CIDA
- intergovernmental organization (IGO)
- non-governmental organization (NGO)
- OAU
- grassroots organization
- empower

Figure 16-1 Every person’s life is different from every other person’s. Therefore, the ways in which we experience quality of life are unique to each of us. This quality-of-life profile suggests there may be nine areas that influence our quality of life. Do you agree with the areas it identifies? Are there other factors that you think influence our quality of life? If so, what are they?

Source: The Quality of Life Research Unit, the Centre for Health Promotion, University of Toronto
Thinking Like a Geographer

Read and Analyze Thematic Maps

Geography skills provide you with the necessary tools and techniques to understand physical and human patterns and processes on earth. You use geography skills every day—for example, when you think about where to look for a part-time job, where to shop, or how to get to your friend’s house. All of these decisions require the ability to gather, arrange, and analyze geographic information.

In this Skill Path, you will have a chance to conduct an investigation using a specific geographic skill—reading and analyzing thematic maps. Thematic maps show the distribution patterns for specific things, such as population, literacy rates, and economic activities. You can learn a lot about the world by comparing various thematic maps.

Your Task: You will have a chance to gain a greater understanding of economic development as you recognize and analyze global patterns of quality of life. The Human Development Index (HDI) is one statistical measure of quality of life. It measures three things: the right to education, the right to a long and healthy life, and standard of living. You can read about the Human Development Index on page 273. Working in groups, complete a visual organizer to identify patterns on the Human Development Index map at right. Then use your atlas to begin to develop a response to the Chapter Issue: To what extent does globalization affect quality of life?

Step 1

Interpret Information

Begin by gathering important information from the map. First, think about what you already know about the topic. For our example, the topic is the Human Development Index. Then review the title and legend and look for patterns on the map that display this information. Ask yourself these questions:

• What information does the map provide?
• How can this information help me identify and assess global patterns?

To read a thematic map, first make sure you understand the information. Ask yourself these questions:
• What does the map show? What is the time period?
• What countries or regions are shown on the map?
• What symbols are used? What does each symbol represent?

Part 4 Issue: Should I, as a citizen, respond to globalization? 269

Figure 16-2 This map shows the countries and regions of high human development, medium human development, and low human development in 2005. These rankings are based on the standards established by the United Nations Human Development Index. Suggest reasons why some countries are shaded grey and identified as “not applicable.”
Chapter 16: Understandings of Quality of Life

Define Quality of Life

What factors influence quality of life?

Do you know the difference between standard of living and quality of life? People sometimes use these two terms interchangeably—but there is a difference. Standard of living measures material things, such as the goods, services, and luxuries we can buy. The more of these we have, the higher our standard of living. Quality of life, on the other hand, includes the material possessions associated with standard of living, but it also includes the non-material things that give our lives “quality.”

Identify Patterns

Now study the map and look for patterns among the colours in the legend. Record your findings in a visual organizer similar to the one shown here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Found Mainly In …</th>
<th>Possible Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High human development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium human development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low human development</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Draw Conclusions

Now you can use the information you gathered in Step 2 to draw some conclusions and to speculate on the reasons for the patterns you have identified. Working in your group, ask, speculate about, and answer questions about these patterns. Use other relevant world thematic maps to help you identify additional patterns that might contribute to your understanding. (You can find maps in your atlas, on the Internet, or on the Living in a Globalizing World website.) Consider the following questions:

- What patterns on these maps are similar to the patterns on the map you are analyzing?
- What conclusions can you draw from these comparisons?

Extend Your Thinking

When you conduct any geographic investigation with maps, extend your thinking beyond the maps in your original inquiry. For example, how would a map of similar information from the past or the future have looked?
Quality of life is difficult to define because it is influenced by a society’s beliefs and values. For many Aboriginal peoples, quality of life includes the right to a traditional way of life from the natural resources in their environment. For many Franco-Albertans, quality of life includes their collective rights, such as the right to be educated in French. As a Canadian teenager, when you turn 18 you have political rights, such as the right to vote in elections. What things do you think are important for a high quality of life? Which of these reflect standard of living and material wealth? Which reflect other elements of life? How and why would your ideas be different from those of people in another country?

Figure 16-3 This artwork was created by David Hasbury for the Canadian Policy Research Network Youth Summit in November 2005. The summit invited young people to express their views on the kind of Canada they want to build. Which of these issues reflect standard of living and material wealth? Which reflect a larger concept of quality of life?

Figure 16-4 These photos show some common indicators of quality of life in Canada and globally. What indicators do they show? Which ones are based on standard of living and material wealth? Which ones reflect other factors of high quality of life? How important are each of these to your own quality of life? What other indicators of quality of life are important to you?
**Voices**

**What Is a High Quality of Life?**

People around the world have different ideas and perspectives about what makes a high quality of life. They may include family, friends, health, good food, a safe home, a clean environment, good education, effective government, and personal happiness. Here are two of many different perspectives on the factors that create a high quality of life, one from an Inuit author and one from Ugandan youth.

*Modern Inuit have embraced the global community, living in houses, paying taxes, watching cable TV. … They have all the modern concerns of waste disposal, managing governments, doing business. … Now here is the miracle: Inuit also still hunt. They still eat traditional foods. They hold drum-dances, throat-chanting events. … The greatest miracle of all, perhaps, is that they still speak their original language. …*

*The concern of the deepest Inuit mind is to maintain the things that give one joy, while trying to adapt to that which does not. Inuit, therefore, are less concerned with alteration than they are with preservation.*


*Figure 16-5* A father and his children explore a rocky shoreline in Alberta. In a poll taken in April 2006, 98 per cent of Albertans said that the quality of life in their community was good, with half describing it as very good. What economic factors do you think contribute to Alberta’s high quality of life? What other factors contribute to our quality of life? Why might opinions about this vary? Which factors are the most important to you? Why?

*Quality of life is measured by the freedom one has to enjoy what his [or her] heart desires politically, economically, and socially. This includes the extent of political freedom [and] security of property and life. The existence of wars in a society reduces the quality of life, freedom of movement and association, and cultural freedom. Some societies cherish their traditional institutions and cultural beliefs, so if they are denied these then their quality of life is reduced. … Other things that determine quality of life include access to adequate food, freedom of worship, and good health. In other words, quality of life … goes beyond the material well-being of a society.*


1. Besides standard of living and material wealth, what factors do these quotations identify as being important to a high quality of life?
2. Do these two perspectives influence your own ideas about quality of life? If so, in what ways?
The Human Development Index

What things do you think are important for human development? The right to a long and healthy life? The right to an education? What about the right to obtain the resources you need to ensure you have an acceptable standard of living?

According to the United Nations, human development involves creating an environment in which people can reach their full potential to lead the kind of life they choose. To measure human development, the United Nations created the Human Development Index. It measures the ability of a country to provide its citizens with the tools and opportunities they need to lead productive and creative lives.

Why are life expectancy, education, and standard of living the global standards for measuring a country’s place on the Human Development Index? Life expectancy reveals the effects of such factors as armed conflict and disease, and the availability of health care, food, and fresh water. Poverty is associated with a lack of educational opportunities and widespread illiteracy. Economic prosperity is a measure of progress. By analyzing the data in these areas, researchers can gain a greater understanding of the challenges many developing countries face.

Redefining Quality of Life

The Human Development Index does not give the entire picture about quality of life. For example, if you looked at the economic data, you would think that all Canadians had the same standard of living. What you would not know is that a Canadian woman working full-time earns less than a man doing a similar job. Nor would the data tell you that Aboriginal peoples in Canada have a lower life expectancy than other Canadians have. Nor would you learn anything about our human rights, our environmental record, our crime rate, or the many other factors that affect the lives of Canadians.

Today, a growing number of economists, social scientists, and political leaders around the world are looking at other ways to measure quality of life. They want to take into account such things as health care, family time, volunteer work, environmental conservation, crime rates, and human rights and freedoms. What other factors do you think affect the quality of life in Canada?
The Canadian Index of Wellbeing

A national group of 20 researchers is developing a Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW). Researchers from Statistics Canada and Environment Canada are working with representatives from eight universities and six non-governmental research organizations from across Canada. They are part of an international effort to establish ways to understand and measure the relationship between social, health, economic, and environmental issues.

The more trees we cut down, the more fish we catch, and the more fossil fuels we burn, the faster the economy grows. Counting the depletion of natural capital assets as gain is simply bad accounting. …

Crime, pollution, accidents, sickness, and natural disasters … all make the economy grow, simply because money is being spent on prisons, lawyers, doctors, drugs, hospitals, war, and pollution cleanup. …

Fortunately, there are better ways to measure wellbeing and progress, ways that assess the health of our natural environment, our communities, and our people. … These new measures assign explicit value to environmental quality, population health, livelihood security, equity, free time, and educational attainment. They value unpaid voluntary and house work as well as paid work. They count sickness, crime, pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions as costs, not gains to the economy. Unlike the GDP, less is sometimes better in these new measures of progress.

When other factors that influence quality of life are taken into account, many analysts believe that globalization has made a positive contribution to the well-being of peoples everywhere.

More direct measures of human well-being than per capita income include freedom from hunger, mortality rates, child labour, education, access to safe water, and life expectancy. …

Today’s average person lives longer and is healthier, more educated, less hungry, and less likely to have children in the workforce. Moreover, gaps in these critical measures of well-being between the rich countries and the middle- or low-income groups have generally shrunk dramatically since the mid-1900s irrespective of trends in income inequality. However, where those gaps have shrunk the least or even expanded recently, the problem is not too much globalization but too little.

Do you think the factors in the Canadian Index of Wellbeing provide a realistic measure of quality of life? Give reasons for your answer.

To what extent do you think there can be a global standard for developing an index of well-being?
How do you measure happiness? In June 2005, people from all over the world gathered in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, to discuss ways to do just that. Hundreds of academics, farmers, environmentalists, business people, entertainers, and health professionals came together hoping to change the way we measure well-being. The idea of gross national happiness originated in the tiny country of Bhutan. It developed a happiness index more than 30 years ago. Although the people of Bhutan are relatively poor, the happiness index indicates that they are among the happiest people in the world.

Calculators may be required in the pursuit of happiness.

Antigonish is hosting an international conference … on gross national happiness, an alternative measure to economics on how well society is doing.

It’s the guiding principle in the Kingdom of Bhutan, a country in the Himalayas that has sent 20 people to this conference, called Rethinking Development.

“Happiness in general has to do with being able to balance the two most important aspects of life, and that is the material needs of the human being as well as the spiritual needs …,” said Jigmi Thinley, Bhutan’s home minister. “Unfortunately, conventional development is biased and it’s catering only to the material needs, and we think it’s important that both are pursued through deliberate development policies.”

Thinley said every development project and strategy is analyzed for its impact on the “four pillars” of national happiness: sustainable and equitable economic development, environmental conservation, cultural promotion, and good governance. When it comes to tourism, for example, Thinley said his small country wants only as many visitors as it can handle. Backpackers are discouraged, he said, because they add little.
1. What are the four pillars on which Bhutan measures happiness?

2. What criteria were used to decide that backpackers to Bhutan are not contributing to Bhutan’s national happiness?

3. Write a set of “Traveller’s Guidelines” that might make this form of globalization—budget travel—a net contributor to Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness.

Promoting Quality of Life

What can nations, communities, and individuals do to improve the quality of life in developing countries?

Figure 16-10  Un don d’espoir (A Gift of Hope), 2005, by Canadian student Aurélie Boyer, was the third-prize winner in the art category in the 2005 Butterfly 208 contest. The annual art, writing, and multimedia contest for Canadian students is sponsored by the Canadian International Developmental Agency. Read the Voices feature on the next page to learn why the artist chose this theme and why she participated in the contest.
Voices

Canadian Youth Raising Awareness

Canadian student Aurélie Boyer created the piece of art in Figure 16-10, titled *Un don d’espoir* (A Gift of Hope). She attends École secondaire Hormidas-Gamelin in Gatineau, Québec. In the following quotation, she describes the theme of her art and her motivation for participating in the Butterfly 208 contest.

*I chose the theme “health and nutrition” because I believe that hunger and lack of potable [drinkable] water are the greatest miseries in the world. The inhabitants of this planet do not all have the same chances in life. Millions of people do not have clean drinking water or enough food to survive. … A number of factors contribute to these conditions, but the main culprit is poverty. Without money, these populations cannot build a future for themselves. …

As Canadians living in a rich country, we must lend a helping hand. … If we help these people to nourish themselves, they will have a chance, like us, to have goals in life. The development of their countries, rewarding work, education for their children, enhanced quality of life: all of these things can become reality. I can contribute by raising awareness [in] the people around me. …


Web Link

Go to the *Living in a Globalizing World* website and follow the link to find out more about Butterfly 208. Learn about this year’s contest and consider becoming involved and increasing awareness of global issues in your community.

Fast Facts

The name “Butterfly 208” is based on the idea that if a butterfly flaps its wings in one part of the world, it may set off a chain reaction that triggers another event in another part of the world. The number 208 represents the number of countries in the world. How does this idea reflect globalization?

1. What does Aurélie Boyer believe are the greatest challenges facing people in developing countries?

2. What responsibility does she believe people in wealthy countries like Canada have?

3. To what extent should you, as a citizen, embrace globalization by raising awareness about the need to improve the quality of life for people in other parts of the world?

Active Citizen

There are many organizations in Canada that invite young people to participate in global issues involving quality of life. Inter Pares and the Stephen Lewis Foundation are two examples. Contact one of these organizations and ask what you, as a citizen, can do to respond to the effects of globalization on the quality of life in a developing country.
Foreign Aid

You may have read or watched news reports about foreign aid and relief efforts around the world. Have you ever wondered how all of this aid is distributed?

More than 80 per cent of Canada’s official aid is distributed through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Some of this aid provides emergency relief during natural disasters, such as tsunamis, earthquakes, and droughts. Most of the aid, however, is committed to improving the quality of life in developing countries through sustainable development projects.

By supporting social and economic development goals, foreign aid contributes to global security and prosperity. Each year, Canada contributes billions of dollars worth of aid in the form of goods and services, knowledge and skills, and financial assistance. Most of this foreign aid is dedicated to helping countries and communities improve their quality of life.

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The United Nations Millennium Development Goals

CIDA supports the United Nations Millennium Development Goals established at the Millennium Summit in September 2000. All members of the UN pledged to set the following targets and goals by 2015:

- eliminate extreme poverty and hunger
- make primary education available to everyone
- promote gender equality and the empowerment of women
- reduce child mortality
- improve maternal health
- combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
- ensure environmental sustainability
- develop a global partnership for development

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CIDA Canadian International development Agency

intergovernmental organization (IGO) an international institution made up of independent countries working cooperatively for a common purpose

non-governmental organization (NGO) a private charitable organization that provides international aid or relief, promotes economic equality, protects the environment, or promotes community development

OAU Organization of African Unity

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Web Link
You can learn more about the Millennium Development Goals by going to the Living in a Globalizing World website and following the link there.

Fast Facts
There are two main types of international aid organizations:
intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Some IGOs, such as the United Nations (UN), are open to all countries. Others, such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU), are regional groups. In what ways do you think intergovernmental organizations promote economic, political, cultural, and social equality to improve the quality of life globally?
Non-governmental Organizations

What comes to mind when you hear names such as Amnesty International, Greenpeace, Red Cross International, and Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders)? You may know that these are among the thousands of NGOs in the world today. Perhaps you know people who are involved in one of these NGOs or in similar global organizations. You might even have volunteered your time or raised money for one of these groups yourself.

Today, there are more than 25,000 NGOs at work around the globe. Many of these have their headquarters in wealthy countries such as Canada, the United States, and Britain. Others operate directly in developing countries. These grassroots organizations fund and run development projects at the local level that are relevant and meaningful to local communities.

Grassroots organizations reflect a shift in traditional methods of promoting sustainable development. In the past, sustainable development projects operated from the top down—that is, international organizations imposed “one-size-fits-all” programs that often made little sense to the people at the local level, who had the best knowledge of local conditions. In the end, these projects often failed to improve quality of life.

Today, the emphasis is on creating partnerships between aid organizations and local residents. By introducing projects that are relevant to the community, individuals obtain greater self-sufficiency. As they do, they create long-lasting opportunities to build a better quality of life.

Land and Hunger: The Fight for Resource Rights

Today, the burden of hunger is greatest among the rural poor—small farmers, farm labourers, and people who do not own land. Many people believe this situation is the result of policies such as free trade and farm subsidies, corporate control of the food industry, and technologies that are harmful to the land. Traditionally, communities made decisions about how to use local resources to meet the needs of local people. Now many decisions that affect how to use local resources are made by powerful international corporations.

Globalization’s impact on rural communities has resulted in an international movement to promote resource rights. People in communities around the world are demanding that governments recognize and guarantee their economic, social, cultural, and political rights and protect them from the negative effects of globalization. Their movement illustrates the connection between access to resources (such as food, land, water, and seeds) and issues of empowerment, environmental protection, and human rights. They are promoting alternative ways of doing things.
Voices

Globalization from Below

Access to food, fertile land, clean water, and other resources are basic human rights. The unequal distribution of these resources leads to poverty and creates hunger and social instability. Today, gaining access to these rights is at the core of many social movements around the world.

As globalization facilitates a process where local communities have less control over how land is used, where their food comes from, and how it is produced, communities are finding local and global tools and strategies to resist the complex financial and political arrangements that threaten their local way of life. …

The global movement for land and water rights is an alternative globalization, a Globalization-from-Below, where communities around the world are forming alliances, finding alternative ways of organizing and developing new concepts of agriculture, industry, and ecology, and showing how they should be managed to promote social and economic justice for all.


1. How does access to resources improve the quality of life for local farmers and their communities?
2. To what extent does globalization affect the quality of life for farm communities?

Figure 16-12 An Indigenous Aymara woman and her son work the soil on their small farm on the edge of Lake Titicaca in Huatajata, Bolivia, 2005. Many people believe that locally produced food is the key to preventing hunger. How do you think globalization affects small farming communities around the world? How do you think it affects small farms in or near your own community?

Explore the Issues

1 Discuss It. What role do you think nations, communities, and individuals should play in improving the quality of life in developing countries? What role do you think Canada should play?
2 Create a Concept Web. Follow the steps in the Skill Path in Chapter 10 (pages 157–158) to conduct research into one non-governmental organization in Canada. Then follow the steps in the Skill Path in Chapter 1 (pages 7–8) to create a concept web highlighting the work this NGO is doing in a developing country.
3 Create a Photo Essay. Using images from the Internet, newspapers, and magazines, create a photo essay to show Canada’s involvement in providing aid in response to a current global crisis. Your photographs should show the nature of the crisis, its impact on local communities, and the actions taken to address problems related to it.
Chapter Summary and Reflection

Apply and Extend Ideas

1. a) Survey television, print, and Internet news sources for one week. (Review the Chapter 8 Skill Path (pages 123–124) before conducting your Internet research.) Identify places and situations where the lives of aid workers are in danger from open conflicts within the community or country. Identify the places, the dangers workers face, and the groups that pose the threats.

b) As a class, discuss what governments can or should do to ensure that workers are safe while they are providing aid in areas of conflict.

2. In a T-chart, compare the Human Development Index and Gross National Happiness as two ways of measuring quality of life. Which would you prefer to use to measure your quality of life? Share your thoughts with another student.

Practise Your Skill

3. a) Review the Skill Path for this chapter. Using a political map, identify two countries from each of the three categories on the Human Development Index map in Figure 16-2 (that is, high human development, medium human development, and low human development). Follow the steps in the Skill Path. Refer to a variety of thematic maps to help you identify patterns and possible reasons for the level of human development in each of the countries you have identified.

b) Combine your work with that of two or three other students to create a detailed picture of indicators and global patterns of quality of life. Present your group results in a multimedia presentation.

Focus on Inquiry

4. Many activists believe that the burden of debt is an obstacle to improving the quality of life in developing countries. They want the industrialized world to forgive debts owed by developing countries. Others disagree with this proposal. They argue that there are no guarantees that if debts are forgiven the money saved will be used to reduce poverty.

a) Do some research into this debate. Present the arguments in a comparison organizer.

b) Write a newspaper editorial expressing your informed opinion on debt relief.

c) The following quotation is from the Dakar Declaration, delivered in Senegal, West Africa, in 2000. The declaration called for the cancellation of African and Third World debt.

Countries of the North owe Third World countries, particularly Africa, a manifold debt: blood debt with slavery; economic debt with colonization and the looting of human and mineral resources; ... ecological debt with the destruction and the looting of its natural resources; social debt (unemployment, mass poverty); and cultural debt (debasing of African civilizations to justify colonization).

What is your opinion about this declaration? Express your point of view in a campaign slogan or another format of your choice.

Reflect on the Chapter Issue

In this chapter, you explored various understandings of quality of life. You discovered some of the factors that influence quality of life around the world, and considered the ways in which governments, organizations, and active citizens have responded. You are now ready to respond to the Chapter Issue: To what extent does globalization affect quality of life? To respond to this issue, it helps to connect not only with the ideas you have encountered in this chapter, but also with related ideas you encountered in the previous 15 chapters. Your teacher will assign each of you to one chapter of this book from 1 to 15. In your assigned chapter, find one idea related to globalization’s influence on quality of life. Share your ideas with the rest of the class. Use these ideas in a class discussion about the Chapter Issue.

This exploration will help you to begin to develop a personal point of view about the Main Issue for Part 4: Should I, as a citizen, respond to globalization?