International Poverty Quiz

1. More than 7 million people throughout the world survive on less than $1 a day. True or False? _____

2. Almost 50% of the world’s population lives on less than $2 a day. True or False? _____

3. Women and their children make up more than 70% of the poorest people on earth. True or False? _____

4. Africa contains the largest number of people in income poverty. True or False? _____

5. Global wealth has doubled from $14 trillion to $28 trillion in one decade. True or False? _____

6. About forty countries today are poorer than they were twenty years ago. True or False? _____

7. The top seven developed countries in the world (called the G-7) have 10% of the world’s population and 63% of the wealth. True or False? _____

8. The wealth divide between the rich and the poor of the world has slowly been closing over the past twenty years. True or False? _____

9. Countries with the highest per capita incomes in the early 1800s are still today’s richest countries, indicating persistence in the structure of international inequality. True or False? _____

10. Some 115 million children do not attend primary school; in addition, one in six of the world’s adults is illiterate. True or False? _____

11. Gaping gender gaps exist in global education: three-fifths of the 115 million children out of school are girls, and two-thirds of the 876 million illiterate adults are women. True or False? _____

12. Conflict presents great challenges to overcoming poverty. True or False? _____

13. In recent decades technological breakthroughs have dramatically improved the lives of impoverished people throughout the world. True or False? _____

14. Every year more than 5.2 million children die of preventable illnesses. True or False? _____

15. The World Health Organization estimates that $35-40 per capita is the bare minimum for basic health services; however, in 1997 average public spending on health was only $13 per capita in developing nations. True or False? _____

16. Diarrhea—caused by unclean drinking water—is a major killer of young children in developing nations: in the 1990s it killed more children than all the people lost to armed conflict in the Second World War. True or False? _____

17. In recent decades, HIV/AIDS has disrupted development. True or False? _____
International Poverty Quiz (continued)

18. The United States gives more official development assistance to impoverished countries than any other developed country. True or False? _____

19. Great divides in wealth among nations threaten global peace. True or False? _____

20. Economic growth is the only thing needed to reduce poverty in a given country. True or False? _____

21. Many people in the developed world think that poor countries are simply not working hard enough to pull themselves out of poverty. True or False? _____

22. Current World Trade Organization (WTO) rules are helping most third world countries move out of poverty by allowing them to participate in, and benefit from, free trade. True or False? _____

23. Agricultural subsidies in rich countries are increasing poverty in different areas of the world. True or False? _____

24. The debt of developing nations prevents effective poverty reduction. True or False? _____

25. Structural Adjustment Programs are key to resolving the problem of debt in developing nations. True or False? _____
International Poverty Quiz Answers

1. False. More than 1.2 billion people—one in every five on earth—survive on less than $1 a day.

2. True. Almost 50% of the world’s population lives on less than $2 a day.

3. True. Women and their children make up more than 70% of the poorest people on earth.

4. False. South and East Asia contain the largest numbers of people in income poverty.

5. True. Global wealth has doubled from $14 trillion to $28 trillion in one decade. However, according to the World Bank, this wealth has not reduced global poverty. In a single day under globalization, poor countries lose nearly $2 billion due to international trade, 30,000 children die from preventable diseases, and $60 million drains from poor countries to rich ones through debt payments.

6. False. Sixty countries are poorer today than twenty years ago.

7. True. The top seven developed countries in the world (called the G-7) have 10% of the world’s population and 63% of the wealth.

8. False. The wealth divide between the rich and the poor is at an all-time high. In the last decade the world’s poorest five per cent lost almost a quarter of their real income while the top five per cent gained 12 per cent. The richest 1% of the world’s population has as much wealth as the poorest 57%. Trade is one important factor in this widening gap: for every dollar generated by world exports only three cents goes to low-income countries.

9. True. Countries with the highest per capita incomes in the early 1800s are still today’s richest countries, indicating persistence in the structure of international inequality. In 1820 Western Europe’s per capita income was 2.9 times Africa’s—and in 1992, 13.2 times. In recent decades there has unquestionably been a widening gap between the income of the very richest and the very poorest.

10. True. Some 115 million children do not attend primary school; in addition, one in six of the world’s adults is illiterate. This is due to developing countries’ lack of resources for education. This is a very serious issue because lack of education robs an individual of a full life. It also robs society of a foundation for sustainable development because education contributes to better health, and better education and health increase the productivity that leads to economic growth. Growth then generates resources that finance improvements in people’s health and education, further raising productivity.

11. True. Gaping gender gaps exist in global education: three-fifths of the 115 million children out of school are girls, and two-thirds of the 876 million illiterate adults are women. Women and girls suffer gender bias in access to not only schooling, but also public services, employment opportunities and private property. This trend must be reversed because women are the primary caregivers in almost all societies; thus their education contributes more to the health and education of the next generation than does that of men—even more so when women also have a strong say in family decisions.

12. True. Conflict is a key obstacle to overcoming poverty. Since 1990, conflicts have killed as many as 3.6 million people and have injured many millions more. Particularly tragic is that civilians, not soldiers, are increasingly the victims—accounting for more than 90% of deaths and injuries. When large numbers of civilians are killed, economies and infrastructures collapse, reversing steps that have been taken to reduce poverty.

13. False. Although there is enormous scope for rich countries to channel technological innovations in ways that advance human development, this is not occurring enough. For example, today only 10% of global spending on medical research and development is directed at the diseases of the poorest 90% of the world’s people. Furthermore, patents restrict the use of new technologies to a small number of wealthy countries.
14. False. Every year, more than 10 million children die of preventable illnesses—30,000 a day. Moreover, more than 500,000 women a year die in pregnancy and childbirth. These deaths are caused by developing countries’ lack of resources for health systems, lack of equity in what systems provide and lack of efficiency in how services are provided. Moreover, it is almost impossible for developing countries to pay international prices for life-saving medicines. In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, rich countries must provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries.

15. True and False. It is true that, according to the World Health Organization, $35-40 per capita is the bare minimum for basic health services; however, in 1997 average public spending on health was only $6 per capita (not $13 per capita) in developing nations. In high-income countries, average public spending was $1,356 per capita.

16. True. Diarrhea—caused by unclean drinking water—is a major killer of young children in developing nations: in the 1990s it killed more children than all the people lost to armed conflict in the Second World War. More than 1 billion people in developing countries lack access to safe water due to lack of resources to finance high-cost infrastructure. Most affected are poor people in rural areas and slums.

17. True. In recent decades, HIV/AIDS has disrupted development, along with other factors such as unjust international trade rules and international debt. There are currently about 42 million people infected with HIV/AIDS. The disease has already killed 22 million people and left 13 million orphans in its wake. By killing and incapacitating adults in the prime of their lives, it can throw development off course. HIV/AIDS is crippling parts of Africa—about 1 in 3 (or more) adults is infected in Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe. In 1998 Zambia lost 1,300 teachers to the disease—two-thirds of those trained each year. By 2020 the hardest hit countries in Africa could lose more than a quarter of their workforces.

18. False. Only .11% of the U.S. gross national product (gnp) is directed to official development assistance. This places the U.S. last on the list of 22 OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries in terms of percentage of gnp. The need for a substantial increase in aid has been recognized by the global community, with an aid target of 0.7% of gnp.

19. True. Great divides in wealth among nations threaten global peace. Monitoring and containing income inequality are essential not only to increase opportunities for as many people as possible, but also to reduce social friction and conflict in areas with high inequality. As globalization deepens and access to information becomes cheaper and more widely available, awareness of global inequality is increasing. International gaps are increasingly harmful and dangerous.

20. False. Economic growth alone is not enough to reduce poverty. Growth can be ruthless or it can be poverty reducing—depending on its pattern, on structural aspects of the economy and on public policies. All countries—especially those doing well on average but with entrenched pockets of poverty—should implement policies that strengthen the links between economic growth and poverty reduction. The same structural conditions that contribute to an entire country’s economic poverty can also affect large population groups in countries that are otherwise relatively prosperous. Reducing poverty in poorer regions requires national policies that reallocate resources to them. The top policy priority here is increasing equity, not just economic growth.

21. True. Many people believe the false premise that poor countries remain poor because of lack of hard work and/or initiative. However, this is not the case. Global economic structures involving trade and debt are culpable of keeping countries entrenched in poverty, and poor nations have very little influence on these structures.
22. False. Although trade has the potential to lift millions of people out of poverty, poor countries are getting a raw deal under the current global trading system of the WTO. They are being bullied and squeezed out of international markets, and even their own local markets. The poorest countries’ share of world trade has dropped by almost half since 1981 and is now just 0.4 per cent. In the last few decades trade has become more and more unfair, with big businesses and rich countries getting richer, while poor ones find it ever-harder to compete. The result is that poor countries are losing US$700 billion from unfair trade rules—14 times what the developing world receives in aid each year and 30 times the amount it pays in debt repayments each year.

23. True. Agricultural subsidies in rich countries are increasing poverty in different areas of the world. These subsidies total more than $300 billion a year—nearly six times official development assistance. Farmers in developing countries cannot compete with these subsidized imports. For example, small Mexican farmers cannot compete with U.S. corn, which sells for about two-thirds less than the actual cost of production. This unfair competition drives many small farmers out of business, increasing poverty and leaving developing countries dependent on food imports from industrialized countries and increasing poverty.

24. True. Despite the Jubilee 2000 Drop the Debt Campaign, more than 85% of the debt owed by the world’s poorest countries has yet to be cancelled. This debt blights the lives of millions of people in the poorest countries because money that could be spent on health care, education and food supplies is still being drained away to pay interest on debts to rich creditors. For example, Africa spends $14.5 billion each year - i.e. $40 million each day - repaying debts and only gets $12.7 billion in aid. Unsustainable debt owed to rich governments and multilateral institutions (which the rich countries control) must be cancelled.

25. False. Structural Adjustment Programs are not helping to resolve the problem of debt in developing nations. Since 1982, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (the two main international financial institutions) have been involved in lending money and refinancing debt in countries which cannot not pay the interest on their loans. These new loans add to the debt burden and come with very strict conditions referred to as Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). SAPs force developing countries to cut domestic spending and gear their economy to export production so they can sell more outside of the country and thus raise funds for debt repayment. This has resulted in less spending on health, education and social services; privatization; layoffs in the public sector; cutbacks on food subsidies; and replacement of small subsistence farms with cash cropping for export. The poor in these countries have been hit hardest by such measures.

Sources: World Bank, CAFOD, Human Development Report 2003