

Part III

LIVING CONDITIONS: A MIXED RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT

1. People look for jobs and income-generating activities that secure a living for their families. But the context in which they operate has become highly segmented and competitive due to technological innovations and types of jobs that are available. Education continues to be the most secure way of obtaining skills and abilities that prepare the youth for joining the labour force. There are, however, major obstacles that people face due to gender biases, poverty, inappropriate and outdated curricula, and unprepared instructors, among other things. Overall, job and income security has decreased as the labour force grows more fragmented and detached due to the impact of globalization. The wide wage dispersion among wages within and across countries has increased and created a two-tiered world.
2. Quality of life is a broad concept that encompasses not only fulfilment of basic needs but also other needs such as human rights, public safety, national security, the environment and recreation. The analysis that is presented here sheds light on what has happened to food security, health and shelter in recent times only. It shows that despite technological changes that have raised the amount of food at the global level to a point where everyone could be fed, hunger and malnutrition persists in both developed and developing countries. Medical innovations, better diets and sanitary improvements have on average drastically reduced morbidity and raised life expectancy, but the quality of life for the vulnerable and the poor has not improved dramatically in the world. Exposure to armed conflicts, political upheavals and HIV/AIDS epidemics have led to reversals in development indicators in too many countries.
3. Thus, trends in quality of life are indeed mixed: accomplishment of considerable progress in certain areas coexists with unresolved problems as well as the emergence of new threats to human development.