Getting Better – Why Global Development is Succeeding – and How We Can Improve the World Even More by Charles Kenny

Review by: Victor Quiroz

The book Getting Better, by Charles Kenny ultimately explains that the world today faces many challenges in alleviating poverty throughout developing world. These challenges include a lack of access to education, health services, and other basic human needs such as food or clean water. However, despite these challenges through continuous innovations in medicine, technology, education, and governments, over time the economic situation has improved and that the world has become a much better place to live. Kenny does a great job of debunking some of the beliefs that have inhibited public efforts to increase the quality of life. For example, one of those beliefs is that growth models have a direct impact on improving the economic situation in poor countries. However, the reality is that policy changes and models have little effect on a countries growth. Kenny claims that what really causes a country to grow cannot depend on just attribute (such as education, technology, or investment), but the driver of that growth really depends on where the country is and what it faces during the long haul. Another topic that Kenny covers (which I really enjoyed learning about) is how the world has escaped from what is known as the Malthusian Trap. The Malthusian Trap suggests that, "the only check on population growth is near starvation". According to the Malthusian Trap, mankind had essentially capped out its highest levels of production. As a result, when populations increased income diminishes. Vice-verse as the death rates increases so does incomes across the population. Kenny explains that these ideas held true up until about the time of the industrial revolution. As a result, income per person dramatically increased and so did the quality of life. This is one example how technology and innovation broke the Malthusian Trap and paved the way for a better world today.