Health, Development & Human Rights

Democracy & Famine

As you read the material for our next class, keep the questions below in mind. To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages. Keep in mind that there are two basic kinds of information that you need to look for in the readings:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?

2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible conclusion about an issue, rather than another.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.

Readings

- Amartya Sen, "The Importance of Democracy" & "Famines and Other Crises".

Questions

1. In "The Importance of Democracy", Amartya Sen seeks to defend the implementation of democratic institutions as a worthy development goal. What three reasons are often given to argue that democracy is not appropriate for a developing country? Why does Sen reject them? What sorts of positive features of democracy does Sen see?

2. In "Famines and Other Crises", Sen presents his famous analysis of famine. How do his answers to the following questions differ from those given by others:

   - What is a "famine"?

   - What are the principle causes of famine?

   - What is the best way to protect again famine?

   What do you make of this analysis? Does it sensibly apply to the recent famine in the Horn of Africa?

3. These articles are from Sen's book, *Development as Freedom*. Based on your answers to the previous questions, how does greater freedom encourage or otherwise reach development goals?