

Democracy not good at helping poor people

October 19 2006

A group of U.S. political scientists has concluded democracy may not be more beneficial to the poor than other political systems, contrary to prior findings.

The researchers examined mortality rates of children in 169 nations between 1970 and 2000, and found the global condition of the poor, measured by mortality rates, improved dramatically. However, the researchers found improvements in democratic states were about the same as improvements in non-democratic states.

"Most cross-national studies overlook non-democratic states with good economic and social records, which creates the false impression that democracies have outperformed non-democracies," said Michael Ross, an associate professor of political science at UCLA. "Once these and other flaws are corrected, (the studies show) democracy has little or no effect on child mortality rates."

Ross and his colleagues believe that while democracies generally spend more money on education and health, the improvements seem to benefit middle and upper-income groups, and do not translate to improvements for the poorer-class.

The research appears in the current issue of the American Journal of Political Science.

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Citation: Democracy not good at helping poor people (2006, October 19) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2006-10-democracy-good-poor-people.html>

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