



FIGURE 7.15 Standard of Living and Population Growth in Three Countries
 Standard of living is a measure of how well one lives. It is not possible to get a precise definition, but when we compare the United States, Argentina, and Kenya, it is obvious that there are great differences in how the people in these countries live. Kenya has a high population growth rate, a low life expectancy, a high infant mortality rate, and many people without adequate food. Furthermore, their incomes are low and they are poorly educated. The United States has a low population growth rate, a high life expectancy, a low infant mortality rate, and many people who eat too much. People in the United States have high educational levels and high incomes. Argentina is intermediate in all of these characteristics.

Source: Data from The Population Reference Bureau, 2008 Population Data Sheet; and Human Development Report 2007/2008, United Nations Development Program.

Health criteria reflect many aspects of standard of living. Access to such things as health care, safe drinking water, and adequate food are reflected in life expectancy, infant mortality, and growth rates of children. The United States and Argentina have similar life expectancies (over 75 years) and adequate nutrition. Kenya has a low life expectancy (53 years), many undernourished children (20 percent are underweight), and a high infant mortality rate (77 per 1000). The United States has a low infant mortality rate (6.6 per 1000). Argentina has an intermediate infant mortality rate (13.3 per 1000).

Finally, the educational status of people determines the kinds of jobs that are available and the likelihood of being able to improve one's status. In general, men are more likely to receive an education than women, but the educational status of women has a direct bearing on the number of children they will have and, therefore, on the economic well-being of the family. In Argentina and the United States over 89 percent of girls of high school age attend high school but only 48 percent do so in Kenya. Obviously, tremendous differences exist in the standard of living among these three countries. What the average U.S. citizen would consider poverty level would be considered a luxurious life for the average person in Kenya.

HUNGER, FOOD PRODUCTION, AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

As the human population increases, the demand for food rises. People must either grow food themselves or purchase it. Most people in the developed world purchase what they need and have more than enough food to eat. Most people in the less-developed world must grow their own food and have very little money to purchase additional food. Typically, these farmers have very little surplus. If crops fail, people starve. Even in countries with the highest population (China and India), the majority of the people live on the land and farm. (Fifty-five percent of Chinese and 72 percent of Indians live in rural areas.)

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF FOOD PRODUCTION

The human population can increase only if the populations of other kinds of plants and animals decrease. Each ecosystem has a maximum biomass that can exist within it. There can be