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My primary motivation for research is to see if past debt relief in African nations has been an effective means at addressing some of the underlying problems facing African development. More specifically, if debt relief programs have been effective at increasing efforts to promote health and education within selected countries. My research analyzes 14 countries over a 5 year period from 1998-2002. The 14 countries selected include Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. Each of the countries have qualified for debt relief under the World Bank’s Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative.

In order for these to be a meaningful victory in the area of debt relief there must be tangible benefits that affect the people in general. Alleviating the financial constraints of debt must translate into benefits for the people of the given countries. Immediate results are not expected based on the slow nature of the political process and economic factors within a given country. However, with the free economic capacity that comes with debt relief there should be a gradual increase in the allocation of resources towards the promotion of societal welfare. Increased spending on health and education would subsequently contribute to the promotion of societal welfare. Therefore, it is my hypothesis that with an increase in the economic capacity that would come from debt relief, there should be a gradual increase in the resources allocated towards the promotion of health and education.

In order to measure such a situation I will look at government expenditures on health and education in relation to the expenditures spent on serving their debts. It is my prediction that there will be a gradual increase in the government expenditures on health and education in a country if there is a subsequent decrease in a country’s debt service. Conversely, I predict that if there is not a decrease in a country’s debt service over time I would not expect to see increased allocation of resources towards health and education purposes.