

Research Paper



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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: AN APPROACH TO EMPOWERMENT AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

Development has been the continuing pursuit of all nations – rich or poor, western or non-western. The growth of industry, and science and technology accelerated the pace of development, creating progress in many walks of life. With the advent of industrialisation and revolutionary methods of production under the powerful and pervasive industrial capitalism, the economic growth oriented model of development generated enormous amount of wealth, professedly to eliminate scarcity and get rid of the problems arising out of want or dearth of resources. But this econo-centric approach to development has not helped the poor and the marginalised sections of society in enjoying a decent standard of living. This happened because from the very outset, benefits of development remained concentrated in the hands of small, elite groups in a few rich countries – mainly the industrialized ones. The classical economists hailed this model of development inasmuch as it increased productivity and profit.

The development debate that began in the 1970s and continued till the end of 1990, raised some very fundamental questions, arguing whether growth is the end or means. The critics of the econo-centric model of development argued that human beings should be the end of development rather than being the mere means. They further asserted that industrial-cum-technocratic model of development is inequitous and carries elements of capitalist exploitation. The criticism was based on the ideas of such political economists like Adam Smith, Karl Marx, John Stuart Mill and Alfred Marshall who in their writings had warned about the single-minded pursuit of the wealth-driven model of development. However, such views were largely set aside in the pursuit of increased production to satisfy the demands of fast-spreading consumerist culture – a product of capitalism.

KEYWORDS: Development, industrialization, human freedom, people, economic growth

INTRODUCTION

The aftermath of the Second World War was a period of taking stock of this model of development. The World Community adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, celebrating the victory of human freedom and reasserting strongly and clearly that the principal objective of development was human well-being. In subsequent years there followed a series of UN conventions and conferences establishing the principles of people-centred development. The new debate on development rejected the idea of development that was determined by the level of productive forces, and argued that the people alone are the motive force of development. Political leaders in the newly independent countries of the developing world emphatically argued that the purpose of development is the wellbeing people. In 1955 the Nobel Prize winning West Indian economist Arthus Lewis

defined the purpose of development widening the “range of human choice”. But Lewis tended to equate wider choice merely with greater income and had more faith in the old argument of the classical economists that economic growth would inevitably lead to human development.

The contemporary critique of economic development avers that economic growth *per se* does not lead to human development. Economic growth is important but its nature, character and distribution are equally important. A link between economic growth and human well-being has to be created consciously through deliberate public policy measures, such as public spending on social services and fiscal policy to redistribute income and assets. The challenge is to balance the goals of economic growth with those of human development.



While exploring the complex relationship between economic growth and human development, the Human Development Report of 1996 emphasised that there is no automatic link between economic growth and human development, but when these links are forged with policy and determination, they can be mutually reinforcing and economic growth will effectively and rapidly enhance human development. The report concluded that the structure and quality of growth demand greater attention than the quantity of growth. Haq (2000:209) remarked that unless determined policy efforts are made, economic growth can be: (a) **Jobless** (expansion of output without expansion of jobs) or (b) **ruthless** (where the fruits of growth mostly benefit the rich), or (c) **voiceless** (where the growth in the economy is not accompanied by an expansion of democracy or empowerment) or (d) **rootless** (which causes peoples identity to wither) or even (e) **futureless** (where the present generation squanders resources, particularly the natural environmental capital, needed by future generations).

Emergence and Growth

The rediscovery of human development is not a new invention. It is a tribute to early philosophers, economists and political leaders who have long emphasized “human well-being” as the purpose and the end of development. Early quantitative economists --William Petty, Gregory King, Antoine Lavoisier and Joseph Lagrange -- followed by political economists -- Karl Marx and John Stuart Mills took a functionalist view of human development and emphasised the paramony of social concerns: welfare being the measuring rod of money and human well-being being the core of development. Both of them emphasised the social purpose of national wealth creation, namely, the fulfilment of human choices, which they said, extend beyond economic well-being. The international debate on the changing paradigms of development since the mid-twenties witnessed a significant shift of focus: from economic growth to socio-economic development and later, from socio-economic development to human development. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) contributed much to the international economic thinking emphasising that the purpose of development is human well-being, which was rechristianed as ‘human development’ in 1990 with the publication of the first Human Development Report by the UNDP.

From a mere idea, human development has now become a vibrant intellectual movement and a practical strategy of development. (Haq, 2000: XIX). Today, it is widely accepted that the real purpose of development is to enlarge people’s choices in all fields -- economic, political, and cultural. The trial of human development idea and its strategies have witnessed an unprecedented explosion in the thinking on the subject over the recent years. There is, therefore, an extensive amount of writings in the human development field. Commenting on the emergence and growth of human development as a major focus of economic thinking Mahbub-ul Haq famously wrote: “It appears that human development is an idea whose time has come. People-centred strategies have increasingly become the focus of all development dialogue (Haq, 2000:XIX). Today it is widely accepted that the real purpose of development is to enlarge people’s choices in all fields --social, economic, political and cultural. Seeking increase in income is one of the many choices people make, but that is not the only one. We have finally

begun to accept the axiom that human welfare -- not GNP -- is the true end of development. In a short summation, the human dimension of development is not just another addition to the development dialogue. It is entirely a new perspective, and a revolutionary way to recast the conventional approach to development (Haq, 2000:11). Human development is a concern not only for the poor countries and the poor people, but everywhere (Streeten, X foreword). Human development goes beyond basic needs in that it is concerned with all human beings -- not only the poor and not only in the poor countries -- and not only basic needs. Human development applies to the advanced countries as much as to the middle-income countries and low-income countries.

Definition and Concept

Since it launch in 1990 the successive Human Development Reports have defined human development as the process of enlarging people’s choices by expanding human functioning and capabilities. The most critical ones of these choices are to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated and to enjoy a decent standard of living. Additional choices include political freedom, other guaranteed human rights and several ingredients of self-respect. These are among the essential choices, the absence of which can block many other opportunities. Human development is thus a process of widening people’s choices as well as raising the level of human well-being achieved.

The concept of human development embraces a broad range of choices in economic, social, and political arenas. It covers more than knowledge, a long and healthy life and decent standard of living. Issues like freedom, democracy and human security are also important (HDR, 1996:17). The concept of human development enlarges the notion of human well-being and conceives it more widely to include, not only the consumption of goods and services but also the accessibility of all sections of population, especially the deprived ones and those who live below the normative minimal poverty line to the basic necessities of a productive and socially meaningful life. Such a conceptualization of human well-being encompasses individual attainments in areas of education and knowledge; health and longevity; as well as in the quality of overall social and physical environment of the people.

There is, however, a widespread misperception that human development is only about economic and social outcomes such as reducing income poverty and improving health and education. Though these are important for human development, its aim is much broader -- to promote the freedom, wellbeing and dignity of the people everywhere. Economic growth is a means to these broader ends. Broadly conceived, human development is about people, and about expanding their choices to lead the lives they value. Its about creating an environment for people to develop their full potential and lead productive and creative lives. It is about enlarging human choices for building human capabilities, the most basic being leading a healthy life, being educated, having access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living and being able to participate in the life of the community. The concept of human development centres around the development of the people, for the people and by the people. Development of the people means investing in human capabilities, whether in education or health or skills, so that they can work productively and creatively. Development for the people means that economic growth that is generated is equitably distributed widely. Development by the people

means that development must concentrate on giving everyone a chance to participate in development.

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS

There are four essential components in the human development paradigm: equity, sustainability, productivity and empowerment (Haq: 1995). **Equity** envisages equitable access to opportunities and demands a fundamental restructuring of power in society, namely, the distribution of productive assets, the distribution of income, and access to economic and political opportunities. Thus viewed, equity is a powerful concept that lies at the heart of human development paradigm. **Sustainability** implies prudent use of all forms of capital – physical, human, financial and environmental and avers with the view that depletion in any of these forms of the capital will mortgage the chances for sustainable development and will rob the future generations of their options. Sustainability in the human development context refers to distributional equity – of sharing development opportunities between present and future generations and ensuring intragenerational and intergenerational equity in access to opportunities. **Productivity** here means investments in people and an enabling macroeconomic environment for them to achieve their maximum potential. Economic growth is therefore a subset of human development models – an essential part but not the entire structure. **Empowerment** here means that people are in a position to exercise choices of their own free will. It implies political democracy, economic liberalism, decentralization of power and involvement of civil society.

SCOPE AND COVERAGE OF ISSUES

The scope and coverage of issues under the broad umbrella of human development is pretty large to include all such issues, policies and programmes which contribute to strengthening of human capabilities and widening of peoples choices. The Human Development Reports, right since their inception in 1990, deal with issues concerned and connected with the promotion of sustainable human development. While the first report (1990) introduced the concept of human development and constructed the Human Development Index (HDI), later reports dealt with: (i) financing of human development and the role of the government (1991); (ii) international dimensions of financing human development and the role of global markets (1992); (iii) people's participation in development (1993); (iv) new imperatives of human security in homes, jobs, streets, communities and in their environment (1994); (v) gender and human development and construction of Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) (1995); (vi) link between economic growth and human development (1996); (vii) human development and eradication of poverty and the introduction of Human Poverty Index (HP) (1997); (viii) consumption standards and human development (1998); (ix) globalization and human development (1999); (x) human rights and human development (2000); (xi) making new technologies work for human development (2001); (xii) deepening democracy in a fragmented world (2002); (xiii) Millennium Development Goals – the compact among nations to end human poverty; and (xiv) cultural diversities in a globalized world (2004).

Dealing with the host of issues integrally connected with human development all these reports have helped: (i) compiling of national human development reports, reflecting the human development scenario with statistics and policy concerns and commitments; (ii) preparing human development

country profiles; (iii) improving human development statistics; (iv) setting up of human development targets; (v) assessing the cost of targets; (vi) clarifying the role of government, civil society, NGOs, private sector and international development agencies; (vii) deciding the financial responsibility of different players/stakeholders; (viii) formulating comprehensive national strategies for human development; (ix) seeking external cooperation through more effective technical assistance and financial and; (x) building political alliances to accelerate the pace and progress of human development.

MEASUREMENT AND INDICATORS

To measure human development, the UNDP has devised human development indices such as HDI (Human Development Index), HPI (Human Poverty Index), GDI (Gender-related Development Index), GEM (Gender Empowerment Measure), HFI (Human Freedom Index) and PFI (Political Freedom Index). HDI (Human Development Index) is a summary measure of three dimensions of human development concept: living a long and healthy life, being educated and having a decent standard of living (Anand and Sen, 1994). It combines measures of life expectancy, school enrolment, literacy and income to allow a broader view of a country's development than using income alone – which is often equated with wellbeing. The HDI can highlight the successes of some countries and the slower progress of others. Rankings by HDI and by GDP per capita can also differ, showing that high levels of human development can be achieved without high-incomes- and that high incomes do not guarantee high levels of human development. HPI (Human Poverty Index) reflects the distribution of progress and measures the backlog of deprivation that still exists. The HPI measures deprivation in the same dimensions of basic human development as the HDI. It is measured on two indices: HPI-1 and HPI-2. **HPI-1** measures poverty in developing countries. It focuses on deprivations in three dimensions: longevity, as measured by the probability at birth of not surviving to age 40; knowledge as measured by adult literacy rate; and overall economic provisioning, public and private, as measured by the percentage of people not using improved water sources and the percentage without sustainable access to an improved water sources and percentage of children underweight for age. **HPI-2** focuses on deprivation in the same three dimensions as HPI-1 and one additional one, social exclusion. The indicators are the probability at birth of not surviving to age 60, the adult functional literacy rate, the percentage of people living below the income poverty line and long-term unemployment rate. **Gender-related Development Index (GDI)** measures achievements in the same dimensions and using the same indicators as the HDI, but captures inequalities in achievement between women and men. It is simply the HDI adjusted downward for gender inequality. The greater is the gender disparity in basic human development, the lower is the country's GDI compared with its HDI. **Gender Empowerment Measures (GEM)** reveals whether women can take part in economic and political life. It focuses on participation, measuring gender inequality in key areas of economic and political participation and decision-making. It tracks the percentage of women in parliament, among legislators, senior officials and managers and among professionals and technical workers – and the gender disparity in earned income, reflecting economic independence. Differing from the GDI, it exposes inequality in opportunities in selected areas.

Commenting on the value of the human development indexes, Paul Streeten in his 'Foreword' to Mahub ul Haq's book – **Reflections on Human Development** made an important observation worth quoting here. He wrote: "Such indexes are useful in focussing attention and simplifying problems. They are eye catching. They have a considerable political appeal. They have the stronger impact on the mind and draw public attention. The strongest arguments in their favour is that they show up the inadequacies, such as GNP. They reflect our attention from one set of items to others". He, however, add a caveat: "The concept of human development is much wider than what can be caught in any index or set of indicators (Streeten, 1995:XIII).

A Holistic Concept

As human development covers all aspects of development, it is viewed as a 'holistic concept', or a 'holistic development model'. It embraces every development issue, including economic growth, social investment, people's empowerment, provision of basic needs and social safety nets, political and cultural freedoms and all other aspects of people's lives. Most of the recent elaborations of the human development paradigm have been carried out by the annual Human Development Reports, which since 1990 have been commissioned by the UNDP. For over a decade, through its global Human Development Reports, the UNDP has been in the forefront of an effort to generate, in the contemporary development discourse, a policy focus on the broader attributes of human wellbeing.

'Human Development Models' as evolved by the UNDP do not which require only the provision of basic service, normally by the State. The models embrace all choices – particularly political, social and cultural – while the basic needs models are generally limited to economic choices. The human development models cover all aspects of development.

The main aspects of human development models are: (i) development must put people at the centre of its concern; (ii) the purpose of development is to enlarge all human choices, not just income; (iii) the human development paradigm is concerned both with building up of human capabilities (through investment in people) and with using those human capabilities fully (through an enabling framework for growth and development; (iv) human development has four essential pillars, equity, sustainability, productivity and empowerment; (v) it regards economic growth as essential but emphasises the need to pay attention to its quality, distribution, its link with human life and questions of long-term sustainability; (vi) it defines ends of development and analyses sensible options of achieving them; (vii) it consistently takes the view that growth is not the end of economic development – but that the absence of growth often is. Economic growth is essential for human development but to fully exploit the opportunities for improved wellbeing that growth offers, it needs to be properly managed; and (viii) there is no automatic link between economic growth and human progress.

The human development paradigm suggests **four ways** to create desirable link between economic growth and human development: First, the emphasis on investment in education, health and skills of the peoples to enable them to participate in growth process as well as to share its benefits; the second, more equitable distribution of income and assets – because it is critical for creating a close link between

economic growth and human development, the third, well structured social expenditures by the Government; and fourth, the empowerment of people, particularly women, is a sure way to link growth and human development. In fact, empowerment should accompany all aspects of life. In conclusion, it is fair to say that human development paradigm is the most holistic development model that exists. It embraces every development issue. It is neither narrowly technocratic nor overly philosophical. It is a practical reflection of life. Here it is also pertinent to write that the holistic model of human development has been pioneered, promoted and intellectually enriched by Mahbub ul Haq, the renowned economist of Pakistan who served the UNDP for more than a decade, and is credited to be the chief architect of the early Human Developments, launched under the sponsorship of the UNDP. Human Development Reports published annually, have made enormous contribution to international development debate. The first Human Development Report (1990) introduced the concept of human development and argued that real purpose of development should be to enlarge people's choices. Subsequent Reports have developed the basic concept. Each Report has presented the balance sheets for human development, for both industrial and developing countries. Since their inception Human Development Reports have attracted a great deal of international attention and debate. And many countries, going beyond discussions and policy statements, are putting human development into practice.

NATIONAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORTS

National Human Development Reports are being published since 1992. These reports build on the analytical framework of the global Human Development Reports by examining the countries' most pressing development issues and exploring ways to place human development at the forefront of the national political agenda. These reports are unique country-owned products, written by leading national experts and intellectuals and often containing data not published elsewhere. Through a country-led process of consultation, research and report writing, they bring together diverse voices, put difficult issues on the table and help mobilize action for human development policy-making. The reports are also a tool for policy analysis and planning that contributes to progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and provide a unique, and a valuable resource in analysing global issues.

Since 1992 more than 400 regional and national human development reports have been produced in more than 135 countries. All these reports emphasise key human development concepts. In addition, each national team addresses to specific themes tied to the country's most urgent development issues. Reports have addressed human development approaches to governance, poverty, economic growth, gender, peace and security, survival and health, the environment and information and communication technology. Although 299 national reports have been on general human development, most have addressed other pressing issues facing the nation at the time of publication – including 263 that have analysed governance – related topics such as civil society, youth, human rights, the role of the state, decentralization, social cohesion and exclusion, participation, inequity and democracy. The reports offer concrete policy recommendations on how to tackle these thematic areas through the human development prism.

STRATEGIES AND POLICY PERSPECTIVES

Human development strategies emphasize the need to allocate adequate public investments in favour of human development priorities: shelter and quality of housing; sanitation – access to toilet facilities; access to safe drinking water, access to electricity; road connectivity; provisions of to basic and secondary education and primary health care. However, the human development strategies of the majority of developing countries traditionally and currently emphasise investing in education and health and promoting equitable economic growth. Education and health are indeed the two pillars of human development. Accelerating human development requires universal primary education. This is the foundation on which the secondary and tertiary education and skill training can be built. Central to this is the strategy to provide quality primary education to all school age – children. Public funding of education has to be increased on primary and secondary education. Similarly, health is a sector of human development to provide individuals the choice to live a healthy life – free from illness and ailments – and a reasonable life span – a crucial attribute in the notion of personal wellbeing. Likewise, a transition from high incidence of morbidity and mortality is considered a desirable and valued social change. Attainments on other dimensions of human developments – water, sanitation and shelter can reinforce the transition towards better health and longevity of the population. However, systems of health and education are severally underfunded in most of the low-income countries. With small and inadequate budgets, poor people lose out.

Countries with low human development – particularly those stuck in poverty – have the most pressing needs in terms of nutrition, health, education, water and sanitation – the essential ingredients of human development. These countries must construct coherent strategies for achieving Millennium Development Goals and to increase investment on human development measures. Each developing country must, therefore, pursue a human development strategy that meets its specific needs. National strategy should be based on solid evidence, good science and proper evaluation and monitoring.

With regard to policy perspectives the top priority has to be accorded not only to sustained economic growth but also to equity, good governance and an effective human rights regime to remove discrimination, secure social justice and promote the well-being of all people (HDR, 2003:4). Equally important is to strengthen welfare, development and empowerment policies and institutions for the weaker and vulnerable sections of society. Public policy needs to respond to the issues of resource levels, performance standards and efficiency and effectivity of such social development policies and programmes that directly focus on rural areas, poor communities and women, children and the aged. What is needed is that the efforts be properly resourced, and services to be distributed more fairly and efficiently.

THE INDIAN SCENARIO

While the country has made tremendous progress in economic development, infrastructural resources and technological advancement, all these have, however, not resulted in the materialization of universal human wellbeing as a product of development efforts. Concededly, the impressive economic growth has not been accompanied by

sustainable improvements in social well-being. The new thinking, therefore, is that the prosperity of the few and the penury of many would create such imbalances that would generate tensions and conflicts resulting in the tearing apart of the social fabric of society. Accordingly, human development has been accorded priority in the planned programmes of development since the inception of the planning progress and constitutes the first and an important area of concern for India Vision 2020 (Ray, 2004:19). Despite budgetary limitations the Central and State governments continue to invest more in social development sectors – demography, food security and nutrition, employment, education, health and vulnerabilities. However, despite impressive achievements the country's record of human development is far from satisfactory. The country is being ranked low in the successive Human Development Reports of the UNDP. The poor ranking of the country is a reminder of the daunting human development challenges in the face of the unacceptable and yet persisting levels of deprivations in many aspects of people's lives.

Following the UNDP's human development framework the National Human Development Report (2001) of the Planning Commission, Government of India has broken fresh ground in quite a few ideas in presenting the status of human development at state level in India. It has, for the first time, put together an extensive data base for social indicators on various aspects of the quality of life on three critical dimensions of wellbeing namely, longevity (the ability to live long and healthy life); education (the ability to read, write and acquire knowledge); and command over resources (the ability to enjoy a decent standard of living). The Report presents a comprehensive profile of the state of human development in India. It notes with some satisfaction that the overall human development as reflected in the HDI has improved significantly between 1980 and 2001. At the national level, during the eighties the index has improved by nearly 26 per cent and by another 24 per cent during the nineties. There have been an improvement both in rural as well as in urban areas. Though the rural-urban gap in the level of human development continues to be significant, it has declined during the period. Inequalities across States on the HDI are less than the income inequality as reflected in the per capita State Domestic Product. At the State level, there are wide disparities in the level of human development. The economically less developed States are also the States with low HDI. Similarly, the economically better off States are also the ones with relatively better performance on HDI. However, the relation between the HDI and levels of development does not show any correspondence among the middle-income states in the country (NHDR, 2002:34).

In respect of two very critical components of HDI, i.e., literacy and longevity, the scenario seems to be stupefying. At present India has achieved a literacy rate of 64 per cent but still the gross number of illiterates (approximately 300 million adults, 30 per cent of the entire population is the largest in the world). The current enrolment rate for primary education is around 77 per cent and for secondary education about 60 per cent. The education sector has a high drop-out rate, only two out of 10 students reach the 9th standard.

Measured in terms of infant mortality rates, maternal mortality, life expectation and nutrition, the health of the Indian population has improved dramatically in the past 50 years. Life expectancy has risen from 33 years to 64 years.

The infant mortality rate (IMR) has fallen for 148 to 71 per 1000. The crude birth rate (CBR) has fallen from 25 to under 9. The couple protection rate (CPR) and total fertility rate (TFR) have also improved substantially. Yet despite these achievements, wide disparities exist between different income groups, between rural and urban communities, between

different states and even districts within states. Communicable diseases remain the major cause of illness. The infant mortality rate among the poorest quintet of the population is 2.5 times higher than among the richest. Maternal mortality remains very high. More than one lakh women die each year due to the pregnancy-related complications

Human Development Parameters at a Glance

Parameters	Present percentage
Poverty as % of population below poverty line	26.0
Male adult literacy rate%	68.3
Female adult literacy rate%	44.0
Net primary school enrolment ratio	77.2
Life expectancy at birth in year	64.0
Infant mortality rate per 1000 live births	71.0
Child malnutrition as % of children under 5 years based on weight for age	45.0

Source: World Development Indicators, 2001. The World Bank

Having assessed the country's human development scenario in terms of specific human development indices, the Report makes certain candid admissions, showing that: (a) slow improvements in gender equality; (b) considerable decline in human poverty along with persistence of striking inter-state level differences; (c) low attainments for women and for people residing in rural areas; (d) women, children and other poor, socio-economically backward and vulnerable people in both rural and urban areas are typically progressing slower than the national average; and (e) the urban-rural gap appears to be persisting or worsening in all sectors of human development.

Notwithstanding the inadequacies of human development infrastructure and the financial constraints and budgetary limitations of the Central and State Governments, National Human Development (2001), highlights the centrality of human development paradigm, and suggests, amongst several measures, the need to formulate and prescribe appropriate public policy measures, institutional structures, and approaches and perspectives to accelerate the pace and progress of human development. In the 'Foreword' to the National Human Development Report, (2001). Sri K.C. Pant, the then Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission emphasised the necessity of having a framework of such development strategies that forge and strengthen the link between economic growth and human development, and encourage the most effective and efficient use of available

resources for furthering the well being of the people. For any approach or development framework to be meaningful and effective in directing public policies and programmes, it has to be anchored in a social context. It is therefore necessary for countries like India to develop a contextually relevant approach to human development, and identify and devise appropriate indicators to help formulate and monitor public policy. The imperatives of human development require more government interventions, greater government presence and better allocations.

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