VOL. 04 NO. 2,
MAY, 2024
E-ISSN 3027-1533
P-ISSN 3026-8648

African Scholar Publications & Research International
www.africanscholarpub.com

Journal of African Innovation & Advanced Studies (JAIAS)

An Appraisal of the Human Development Index as an Alternative Approach to the Third World Countries Development

[1]Kabiru Hussaini; [2]Amina Ahmed; [2]Rabiu Barau Bal; [1]Apollos Marsadino Adunmani; & [1]Salisu Adamu

[1]Gombe State University, Gombe. [2]Bauchi State University, Gadau.
kabiruhussaini2@gmail.com; mimiah007@gmail.com; rabiubaraubal@gmailgmail.com; apollos365@gmail.com; salisuadamu21@gmail.com

Abstract

The paper aimed to analyze the human development index critically. In doing so attempt has been made to explore indices beyond the enabling capability approach that emphasizes the three sectorial aspects of the society to a more encompassing and holistic approach that includes political freedom, security, good governance, political stability, gender, environmental condition, and human rights. Drawing from its strength the paper takes a position that if developing countries like Nigeria can take pragmatic steps to address developmental challenges then the human development paradigm certainly will be the model that can accelerate development rapidly.

Keywords: Human, Development, Third World, Countries

Introduction

Human development arose partly due to growing criticism of the leading development theory approach of the 1980s, which presumed a close link between national economic growth and the expansion of individual human freedom. Many, such as Mahbub ul Haq, the Pakistani economist who played a key role in formulating the "human development paradigm", came to recognize the need for an alternative development model due to many factors: Growing evidence that did not support the then-prevailing belief in the trickledown effect power of market forces to spread the benefits and end poverty; growing awareness of the human costs of Structural Adjustment Program; the ongoing spread of social ills (crime,

weakening of social fabric, HIV/AID, pollution, etc.) even in the face of consistency economic growth; a wave of democratization in the early '90s, which rise hope for a people-centered model.

What does Human Development Mean?

Human development as a concept has always been flexible and open-ended concerning more specific definitions as we shall see in the following:

> Human development has two side sides: the formation of human capabilities- such as improved health, knowledge, and skills- and the use people make for their capabilities- for leisure, productive purposes, or being active in cultural, social, and political affairs. If the scales of human development do not finely balance the two sides, considerable human frustration may result. (World Bank, 1990:10-11)

Put simply, Human development represents an equation, the left-hand side of which reflects human capabilities, and the right-hand side, economic, political, and social opportunities to use those capabilities (UNDP, 1990).

Sen, (2005) defined human development as a process of enlarging people's choices and enhancing human capabilities (the range of things people can be and do) and freedoms, enabling them: to live a long and healthy life, have access to knowledge and a decent standard of living, and participate in the life of their community and decision affecting their life.

Human Development aims to expand people's freedoms and the worthwhile capabilities people value and to empower people to engage actively in development processes, on a shared planet. People are both the beneficiaries and the agents of long term, equitable human development, both as individuals and as groups (UNDP, 2010).

Human Development is development *by the* people *of the* people and *for the* people. And it seeks to do so in ways that appropriately advance equity, efficiency, sustainability, and other key principles (UNDP, 2010).

The key element in the above definitions is choices, which in principle, these choices can be infinite and change over time. But at all levels of development, the three essential ones are for people to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge, and to have access to recourses needed for a decent standard of living. If these essential choices are not available, many other opportunities remain inaccessible.

Enlarging human choices is critically linked to two issues: ***capabilities and functioning*** on one hand, and ***opportunities*** on the other. Functioning of a person refers to the valuable things the person can do or be (such as being well nourished, living a long time, and taking part in the community). However, capabilities cannot be used unless opportunities exist to use them for productive purposes, leisure, or participation in social, political, or cultural affairs.

Similarly, our capabilities are expanded (or constrained) by our efforts or by the institutions and conditions of our society. People with extensive, well-developed capabilities have the tools they need to make their vision of "a good life" a reality. Those poor in capabilities are less able to chart their course and seize opportunities. Without basic capabilities (i.e. good health and nutrition, education, skill training, etc.), the human potential remains unfulfilled.

COMPONENTS OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX

The Human Development Index (HDI) is the most widely used around the world. It was developed as an alternative to simple money metrics. It is easy to understand numerical measures made up of what most people believe are the very basic ingredients of human well-being: health, education, and income. The first Human Development Index was presented in 1990. However, there is a growing concern that the three (3) components mentioned above are not sufficient to capture every aspect of HD. But, instead, they advocate the use of many indicators which according to them will tell a lot about human development.

Access to Knowledge

Knowledge constitutes the road to development and liberation. It is generally accepted that knowledge is a core factor of production and principal determinant of productivity and human capital. There is an important synergy between knowledge acquisition and the productive power of an individual. Access to knowledge is a critical determinant of long-term well-being and is essential to individual freedom, self-determination, and self-sufficiency. Education is critical to people's real freedom to decide what to do and who to be. Education builds confidence, confers status, dignity, and broadens the horizons of the possible—as well as allowing for the acquisition of skills and credentials (Henderson, 2014).

Access to knowledge is measured using indicators such as adult literacy level, years of school enrolment, staff-students ratio, number of students per class, accessibility, and equal opportunity irrespective person's age, sex, race, gender, religion, class, or ethnic affiliation.

Long and Healthy Life

The most valuable capability people possess is to be alive. Advancing human development requires, first and foremost, expanding real opportunities is not just a paper freedom so to speak. for instance, the capability to enjoy healthcare requires that the health clinic exists, that it is staff, that medical supplies are stocked, and that patients are not refused treatment for lack of money or because of gender, race, age, or religion. People have to avoid premature death by disease or injury, enjoy protection from arbitrary denial of life, live in a healthy environment, to maintain a healthy lifestyle, to receive quality medical care, and to attain the highest possible standard of physical and mental health.

An indicator of one's healthy life is aptly captured in his ability to fight hunger, disease, better nutrition, and greater access to health care service (ability to pay medical bill). Hence, ability to meet the above criteria will enable individual to leave longer. Others include life expectancy at birth-which is the average number of years a baby born today and is expected to live if current mortality patterns continue throughout his or her lifetime, calories intake, infant mortality, death per 1000, crude birth per 1000, maternal mortality per 1000, Doctor per patients, bed space per patients etc (Henderson, 2014).

Income

To attend a decent standard of living, income is an essential component to meet the basic needs like food and shelter—and to moving beyond these necessities to a life of genuine choice and

freedom. Income enables valuable options and alternatives, and its absence can limit life chances and restrict access to many opportunities. Income is a means to a host of critical ends, including a decent education; a safe clean living environment; security in illness and old age; and a say in the decisions that affect one's life. Money isn't everything, but it's something quite important (Henderson, 2014).

Income is measured using % unemployment rate, median personal earnings such as income per capita (PPP), poverty rate ($2 a day), minimum wage policy and child labor.

The above three indices makeup component of Human Development Index (HDI): is defined as an aggregation of indicators into a single representation.

Political Freedoms

Political freedom broadly conceived (including what are called civil rights), refer to the opportunities that people have to determine who should govern and on what principles, and also include the possibility to scrutinize and criticize authorities, to have freedom of political expression and uncensored press, to enjoy the freedom to choose between different political parties, and so on. They include the political entitlements associated with democracies in the broadest sense (encompassing opportunities of political dialogue, dissent and critique as well as voting rights and participatory selection of legislators and executives) (Sen, 1999).

Security

"Human security goes beyond protective mechanisms to include the need to empower individuals, identifying their security threats and articulating the means by which they will implement the changes needed (UN Trust Fund for Human Security, 2007). Human security paradigm shifts the unit of analysis from the physical territory to human beings who dwell within them. It then broadens the focal point from one single threat (i.e. territorial aggression) to multiple threats that could undermine people's security, dignity and livelihood, protection against chronic threats like hunger, abrupt disruptions including social security coverage, joblessness, famine and conflict (UNDP report, 2020).

Good Governance

It is often reiterated that one of the necessary drivers to bring about human development is good governance, and controlling corruption is an important element of this. The assumptions are straightforward. Corruption can result in resources being diverted from the public good to private consumption with the result that impacts intended to be of wider benefit are lost. Corruption may also drive up the costs of doing business with the result that investment is deterred and economic growth will suffer (Morse, 2007).

Political Stability

Likelihood of the overthrow the government; net refugees outflows as a proportion of the population; collective violence, including excessive civilian targeting; and one for political violence (defined as any type of armed conflict from 1990) (Ranis, et al, 2005).

Gender Equality

It focuses on the opportunities open to women. It measure inequality of opportunities in three areas: political participation and decision making; economic participation and decision making; and power over economic resources. Gender Empowerment Index is use as tool for measuring GDI (Morse, 2007).

Environmental conditions

Community well-being as an important category of HD; then as indicator of this elusive concept, include measure of crime rate, corruption, orphan rate, AIDs deaths, % in civic associations, tolerance to neighbor and natural disaster rate, access to sanitation, access safe drinking water **(**liters per capita**),** slum area, squatter/ghetto settlement, pollution and environmental degradation.(UNDP HDR, 2020)**.**

Fundamental human right

To achieve human development, human right must be fulfilled- freedom from discrimination, want, freedom for the realization of one's human potential, for decent work, as well as freedom of participation, expression and association (UNDP Report, 2023).

How Do we Calculate HD?

Life expectancy index

(Life Expectancy - 25) / (85-25) = Life Expectancy Index

Education index

(2/3 * ALI) + (1/3 * GEI) = Education Index

Adult Literacy Index(ALI)

adult literacy rate - 0 / 100 - 0

Gross Enrollment Index(GEI)

*G*ross Enrollment ratio - 0 / 100 - 0

GDP Index

log(GDP per Capita) - log(100) / log(40000) - log(100) = GDP Index

How do we identify whether a country has achieved higher or lower Level of HD?

Countries are rank according scores. The tables illustrate a clear example, the closer the index is to one, the more country developed.

Very high human development

RANK	COUNTRIES	HDI
1	Switzerland	0.967
2	Norway	0.966
3	Iceland	0.959
4	Hong Kong	0.956
5	Denmark	0.952
6	Sweden	0.952

9	Singapore	0.949
10	Netherlands	0.946

Note: UNDP report based on 2023 data published on July 24, 2014.

High human development

70	**Bulgaria**	**0.799**
71	Palau	0.797
73	Grenada	0.793
74	Albania	0.789
75	China	0.788

Note: UNDP report based on 2023 data published on July 24, 2014.

Medium human development

119	**Venezuela**	**0.699**
120	Morocco	0.698
122	Nauru	0.696
123	Gabon	0.693
128	Iraq	0.673

Note: UNDP report based on 2023 data published on July 24, 2014.

Low human development

161	**Nigeria**	**0.548**
163	Togo	0.547
164	Pakistan	0.540
167	Tanzania	0.532
171	Djibouti	0.515

Note: UNDP report based on 2023 data published on July 24, 2014.

Strengths

One major strength of the HD it measures human well-being on the basis of most relevant factors rather than on the basis of per capita income level. The major strength of the HDI is that it takes into account different factors beyond just the G.D.P and the G.N.P. It is an overall measure of development within a country. A good example is China, where the G.D.P is growing by 8.9% rate, while its HDI remains at 0.772. This illustrates again, how the G.D.P is insufficient in accurately determining the quality of life in a country.

It also draws attention to the areas of weakness that a society might wish to devote additional resources to improving.

It make easier to observe and compare the HDI of different countries because of its numerical result. The higher the HDI, the more the country is considered as a developed country. This will catch the attention of the media, the policy makers and the governments since it offers a multi-dimensional view on the social and economic status of a country.

By capturing information about health, education and income in a single data, policy-makers can easily grasp the progress of development of a country. Its format facilitated the comparison between the levels of development between countries.

Weaknesses

Human development as an integrating frame for UN operations still exists more as a hope and a vision than as a reality.

Human development is still too often seen as little more than sectoral concern with education, health, and nutrition .

Critics point out that more serious failure of this approach lies in its inability to develop a clear, comprehensive, and positive macro-economic strategy within which UN member states and agencies can peruse human development goals through priorities for finance.

Another weakness of the HDI is that it does not show the variations of data within a country. Because of this, it is difficult to compare the levels of development for each variable within a country.

Moreover, the data is sometimes not helpful in getting useful feedback on how to improve an aspect of a country. For example, a country may have gotten a score near to 1 for one of the factors, but this doesn't mean that it has no room for improvement.

CONCLUSION

The concept of human development is more or less representing a shift from national to individual as a focal point of development. Indices of measuring human development include-education, income, long and healthy life, human freedom, access to sanitation, good governance, political stability, environmental condition, human security,gender equality, and political stability.

ACRONYMS

UN	United Nations
HD	Human Development
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
G.D.P.	Growth Domestic Product
G.N.P.	Growth National Product
GEI	Gender Empowerment Index
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme

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