



National Human Development Report 2001



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Project NHDR Team

Rajeev Malhotra, Deputy Adviser, Planning Commission.

Arvinder S Sachdeva, Director, Planning Commission.

S V Ramanamurthy, Senior Research Officer, Planning Commission.

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While every care has been taken to reflect that data accurately in the report, oversights/errors if any, may please be conveyed to the NHDR Team, Planning Commission.

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Foreword

The process of development, in any society, should ideally be viewed and assessed in terms of what it does for an average individual. It has to be seen in terms of the benefits and opportunities that it generates for people and how these are eventually distributed — between men and women, the well off and deprived and across regions. Experience shows that, often, there is no direct correspondence between economic attainments of a society and the quality of life. Regions and nations with high levels of income and economic growth need not necessarily have similar social attainments that are desirable not only in themselves but also because of their role in supporting better opportunities for people. It becomes necessary, therefore, to have a framework and evolve development strategies that forge and strengthen the link between the two, and encourage the most effective and efficient use of available resources for furthering the well-being of the people. In this context, the human development framework developed and refined by the UNDP over the last decade deserves special mention.

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. More importantly, it should reflect the values and development priorities of the society where it is applied. It is therefore necessary for countries like India to develop a contextually relevant approach to human development, identify and devise appropriate indicators to help formulate and monitor public policy. This is more so keeping in view many unique concerns and development priorities — in some sense tied with India's stage of development — as well as her social and economic diversity. It is also important that what is articulated, adopted and pursued is based on a broad consensus within the country. The Planning Commission has taken a lead in addressing these issues. I am very happy to present the National Human Development Report 2001 for India.

The National Report has broken fresh ground in quite a few areas in presenting the status of human development at State level in India. It has, for the first time, put together an extensive database for at least two and in some cases three points of time since 1980, covering nearly 70 distinct social indicators on various aspects of the quality of life and well-being of the people. These are in terms of gender, as well as the rural-urban dimension. In India there is a considerable difference in the level of attainments of people depending on their place of residence, whether it is in rural or urban areas, and on the sex of the person. The Report highlights this inequality by estimating the 'Gender Gap' and the 'Rural-Urban Gap' in all indicators where the data is available. The data has been presented in a unique manner, through 'development radars', which gives a snapshot view of the structure, the growth and the gaps vis-à-vis desired normative levels, in respect of eight different indicators covering attainments on education, health, economic well-being and access to amenities. It not only helps in simultaneously assessing attainments in different aspects of quality of life, but is equally useful in identifying the areas of gaps for facilitating an informed policy focus at the State level. The development radars overcome the criticism often directed at the use of subjective weighing techniques to combine diverse social indicators into composite indices of human development.

A core set of composite indices, namely the Human Development Index and the Human Poverty Index, has been estimated. For the first time, a Gender Equality Index has also been constructed. The indices present a quantitative estimate of attainments of the society as a whole, the extent of deprivation and the relative attainments of women as against men. The

identification of the indicators used in building these indices has been done keeping in view the societal values and the development priorities of the country.

One of the factors kept in mind while conceptualising this Report was the need to evolve a human development index that could adequately reflect inter-temporal changes and policy sensitivity in various dimensions of human well-being. We believe, we have succeeded to a significant extent in this endeavour and the index presented here will reflect the changing conditions in different parts of the country more sensitively and accurately than other such indices.

The human development approach cannot be limited to just building relevant indicators and indices. It is not always possible to assign a number to an attainment or a state of deprivation, nor is it always possible to quantify the processes that mediate between the inputs, on one hand, and the development outcomes, on the other. Human development has to reflect and address the social concerns and the processes that underlie the various outcomes. It has to also recognise the local constraints and aspirations of people. With this in view, the Report has explored a range of indicators on all aspects of development that are potentially available even at sub-State levels of disaggregation. The compilation of indicators extends beyond indicators on the economic attainment, educational attainment, health attainment and demographic concerns of society, to indicators on various aspects of the social environment, like the state of the elderly, the working children, the disabled, and violence and crime against women. Besides, aspects of the physical environment having a direct bearing on the well-being of people have also been highlighted.

The Report focuses on the issue of governance for human development. It is an imperative to analyse prevailing governance standards in the country, particularly the factors that are behind the deterioration, as well as the upturn wherever it has taken place, in recent times. It is of critical importance that we establish new benchmarks of efficiency in public management of available resources and direct them for achieving the collective goals of the nation most effectively. A country like ours can hardly afford mismanagement and poor governance. The Report suggests an alternative framework that, perhaps, succeeds in putting the issue in a perspective and takes it beyond the stage of analysis. It outlines the agenda ahead and identifies some instruments that need to be pursued for improving governance in the country.

I have no doubt that what has been presented in this Report will arouse considerable debate in the coming years which will help us to refine it further. Much still needs to be done to integrate this work into the planning framework, though I may add here that a beginning has been made in the Tenth Five Year Plan by explicitly specifying monitorable targets covering economic, social and environmental dimensions of human development.

I commend the hard work that has been put in by the Project NHDR team in preparing this Report. I am sure this Report will prove useful to the academia, researchers, policy planners and administrators engaged in the development of this country.



Shri K C Pant
Deputy Chairman
Planning Commission

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