

Human Development

The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed the development of a new approach to development known as the “Human Development” approach. The approach got widespread popularity with the efforts of the United Nations to make it an avowed purpose for all nation states. By this time, the planners, policy makers and the intellectuals realized that development of a society becomes a myth without the proper development of its human beings who are the ultimate stakeholders of the benefits of development. This thinking led to the development of the concept of “Human Development” which has become the most vital index of and an instrument for development today.

1.3.1 Human Development: The Concept

According to this concept of human development, “Income is merely one option that people would like to have. But it is not the sum total of their lives. Development must, therefore, be more than just the expansion of income and wealth. Its focus must be people.” Human dimension of development presupposes that development should be measured in terms of the richness of human life. It presupposes that people are the real wealth of the nations. So development should be designed and directed to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. Human development is defined as the process of enlarging people’s freedoms and opportunities and improving their well-being. Human development is about the real freedom ordinary people have to decide who to be, what to do, and how to live. To be more definitive human development can be said to be a paradigm that speaks about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests.

The human development concept was developed by the Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq. There was thinking on this human development concept at the World Bank in the 1970s. But it took the concrete shape as an approach when Dr. Haq argued that existing measures of human progress failed to improve people’s lives. In particular, he believed that the commonly used measure of Gross Domestic Product failed to adequately measure well-being.

He noted that the existing model of development had the lacunae of not trickling down to the lower rung of the social ladder. So, it was becoming pro rich and anti poor. Working with Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen and others in 1990 Dr. Haq published the first Human Development Report, which was commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme. The concept of human development was then expanded upon by Martha Nussbaum, Sabina Alkire, Ingrid Robeyns, and others who had development concerns.

1.3.2 Human Development in the United Nation's Agenda

The UNDP, in its Human Development Report has voiced its concern against the jobless, ruthless, voiceless, rootless and fortuneless growth in the late 1990s.

The conventional development process resulted in jobless growth, since the economy grew but did not expand the opportunities for employment for large sections of the population. For the developing countries, jobless growth has meant long hours of work, but very low incomes. Under jobless growth, hundreds of millions of people are into low productivity work in agriculture and in other informal sectors which does not become paying for them.

The traditional developmental process was ruthless by the fact that the fruits of economic growth have mostly benefited the rich; while millions of people stagnate in poverty. Ruthless growth causes people's cultural identity to wither. At places the dominant majority culture amplifies at the cost of marginalisation of the minority cultures. The minority culture gradually withers away.

The development process in practice resulted in a voiceless growth as in many places it has not ensured the process of democratic participation of the people in decision-making processes. The voiceless growth process also provides women a marginal role in economic development. Again, fast economic growth is also achieved in some countries at the cost of destruction of forests, polluting rivers, destroying bio-diversity and depleting natural resources. Development did not reflect the voices of all sections of the society and all sectors of the planet.

The established development practices yielded a futureless growth in the sense the present generation squanders resources needed by the future

generation. At times the futureless growth benefits the industrialised countries at the cost of increased pressure on the poor people of the developing countries. As against this backdrop, the UNDP says development that perpetuates today's inequalities is neither sustainable nor worth sustaining. The UNDP concluded that expansion of real income and economic growth are not necessarily characteristics of successful development as countries with high GDP and per capita income at times have very low achievements in the quality of life.

So the UNDP launched its efforts to make development pro people. For this, it shifted the development paradigm for growth centric to people centric development and insisted upon human development.

United Nations Development Programme has been defining human development as "the process of enlarging people's choices. The choices can be enlarged by allowing them to "lead a long and healthy life, to be educated, to enjoy a decent standard of living", as well as "enjoying political freedom, other guaranteed human rights and various ingredients of self-respect."

In principle, these choices can be infinite and change over time. But at all levels of development, the three essential ones that can indicate human development are:

(a) To lead a long and healthy life,

(b) To acquire knowledge and

(c) To have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living.

When human development insists upon expanding the choices people, its focus hovers around the following propositions.

- To allow human beings to lead lives that they value
- To improve the human condition so that people have the chance to lead full lives.
- To avoid the concentration of the goods and services that underprivileged people need
- To allow people to take their own decisions.
- To enable human beings to participate in the life of the community.

The human development approach assumes that without these, many choices are simply not available, and many opportunities in life remain inaccessible.

This prevents people from leading a decent life. However, human development does not end there. Additional choices, ranging from political, economic and social freedom to opportunities for being creative and productive and enjoying personal self-respect and guaranteed human rights are also inseparable parts of human development.

Thus, human development is a well-being concept within a field of international development. It involves studies of the human condition with its core being the capability approach. The inequality adjusted Human Development Index is used as a way of measuring actual progress in human development by the United Nations. It is an alternative approach to a single focus on economic growth, and focuses more on social justice, as a way of understanding progress. Fundamental to enlarging these choices is building human capabilities —the range of things that people can do or be in life.

Capabilities are "the substantive freedoms [a person] enjoys to lead the kind of life [they have] reason to value."

Thus, the UNDP depicts two sides of human development. They are:

- **The formation of human capabilities – such as improved health, knowledge and access to resources; and**
- **The people making use of these capabilities for productive purposes – being active in cultural, social and political affairs.**