

Development Forum Series



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Human Development Paradigm: Putting People at the Centre of the Development Process

The Gambia

Introduction of the Human Development Report

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The Human Development Concept

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From Income Per Capita to Human Development Index as a Tool to Measure Human Progress with Reference to The Gambia

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Inclusive Growth, Poverty Reduction and Human Development

The first Human Development Report written up in 1990 was a landmark event which ushered in the focus on the Human Development concept as a holistic vision of development, placing people at the centre of all development efforts away from the reigning philosophy up until then that human development was essentially about an individual living a long and healthy life, being educated and having access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living.

In 1990, Mahbub ul Haq and Amartya Sen set the way forward for new thinking. They forwarded the most critical elements of the pro-

cess of Human Development away from wealth being the only means to calculate how well people were doing in life.

The new movement was now engaged with society, not just the economy. It enlarged the range of people's unlimited choices and freedoms which included access to health care, education and income while also advocating for participation in community life and dignity and respect. It now considered all aspects of economic, political, social and cultural freedoms, which are all human rights, just as are better nutrition, secure livelihoods, leisure time and secu-



From left, Mr. Abdou Touray, Mr. Babatunde Omilola, Mr. Felix Downes-Thomas, & Ms. Janice James

rity against crime and physical violence.

Thus, human development emphasises the impacts of development on nations, communities, groups and individuals; and people are meant to be at the centre of the process since it is, after all, they who are a nation's true wealth.

Evolution: search for a new paradigm

The 2011 HDR is the twenty-first edition since 1990, ranking almost 187 countries. The question now arises to examine the continuing notions and indicators considered to see what room and need would be for even newer thinking. Human development is an open-ended and

evolving concept, continuously being enriched by both theoretical and empirical data. It is dynamic and ready for incorporation into policy planning and objectives.

New thinking must lead us to understand that poverty alleviation is not a goal distinct

from human development. Poverty must be explained by inadequate access to income, assets, credit and social services and job opportunities. It would be wrong to believe that economic growth rates will not automatically trans-



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late into higher levels of human development much as it would be wrong to suggest that developing countries lack enough resources to address their human development goals.

In reality, considerable potential exists for restructuring present priorities in national budgets and in foreign assistance allocations. It would be equally wrong to pretend that markets alone can deliver balanced patterns of economic growth and human development. Instead, there must be a judicious mix of marketing efficiency and social compassion.

The Gambia HDI

The Gambia naturally measured its development based on the GDP growth model. It has written four formal poverty studies in 1992, 1998, 2003 and 2010. Its ranking in the global Human Development Index has fluctuated moved from 169th up to 151st. It showed up one point better in 2011 over 2010 performing better than countries such as Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, The Ivory Coast, Mali, Malawi, Sierra Leone and several others.

Measured by the three dimensions of income, health and education, The Gambia grew in 1980 (HDI 0.272), 1990 (0.317), 2000, (0.360), 2005 (0.384), 2009 (0.413), 2010 (0.418), 2011 (0.420). The annual growth rate in

HDI stood at 1.52 % from 1990 to 2011.

Measuring development: methods and challenges

Development, therefore, is about improving the quality of people’s lives and advancing human dignity. However, the central thought confronting everyone is: Who is measuring? What factors are being used to measure? Is all the information in when the calculations are made? Measuring poverty or underdevelopment was basically according to the Morris Physical quality of Life Index which considered life expectancy, mortality and adult literacy as the standardised method.

The human development index (HDI) which arrived in the 1990s introduced an alternative with level of income and economic growth and representing a broader definition of well-being while telling an important story at national and regional levels. They highlight the gaps in people’s well-being and life chances that continue to divide our interconnected world. The question ‘what’ is development is no longer enough; the questions today are ‘who’, ‘how’, and ‘why’.

Diversity in the nature of countries demands that we take a closer look at the specifics of localities. What is considered successful and rewarding in one place may not be so in another. It is

necessary to consider the illiterate old man who is surrounded by sons and daughters in an extended family set up, who finds local resources for food and healing, never goes hungry and lives a fulfilling life to ripe old age. Life for him is about respect, family, social standing and life in the hereafter.

Forum 2011: partnerships and the Development Forum

As part of the launch of the 2011 Human Development Report, the UNDP organised the 2011 Development Forum. With the Government of The Gambia and the stakeholders, the partners came together again, as they had done in the past, to discuss pertinent issues to the development, with this year’s chosen theme as “New Paradigm for ...”

This strong partnership has been credited with the production of reports—the *General HDR* (1967), *Promoting Good Governance for Human Development and Poverty Eradication* (2000), and the *Building Capacity for the Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in The Gambia* (2005). In 2011, it is in the process of preparing a national HDR under the theme of *Youth and Employment in The Gambia*.

Forum 2011: key issues

The drive of the discussion of a new paradigm springs from the consciousness of the demanding need for move forward from the subject of human development of Adam Smith's "Health of Nations and the Theory of Moral Sentiment" through the era of the era of Keynes that and on to the 1980s during which the human development has been viewed from an economic point of view—income and GDP per capita. Gross domestic product has for a long time determined the yardstick used to measure economic success.

Defining the poor: the tool for policy makers

HDI was created to emphasise that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country. It can also be used to question national policy choices, asking how two countries with the same level of GNI per capita can end up with such different human development outcomes.

Poverty is multi-dimensional but is traditionally ignored by headline figures. The Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) compliments money-based measures by considering multiple deprivations and their overlap.

The Index identifies deprivations across the same three dimensions as the HDI and shows the number of people

who are the multi-dimensional poor, suffering deprivations in 33 per cent of weighted indicators) and the number of deprivations with which typically poor households contend. The MPI uses 10 indicators to measure poverty in the three dimensions of education, health and living standard. It can be deconstructed by region, ethnicity and other groupings as well as by dimension, making an apt tool for policy makers.

Poverty in The Gambia

Poverty refers to the lack of basic human needs. It is measured by defining a basket of goods and services consisting of basic needs, basic rights (to exist, education, health, food, equity, participation, happiness etc.), and is drawn from reliable and timely data.

Poverty, therefore, is widespread in The Gambia with huge regional differences. It is still high in the rural regions although urban poverty is a growing problem.

Many people might fall within clusters of gender and minority ethnicity that might cause them to experience discrimination and marginalisation. The more those factors reduce their choices the poorer they are.

Reporting Gaps

In determining ranking the HDI can only use data

available to it. A lack of reportable information can affect the bigger picture as has been the case with The Gambia where the 2011 report on trends over several decades with the environment indicated deterioration on several fronts with adverse repercussions on human development. There was insufficient data on the perceptions on the well-being and environment of the thousands of people who depended entirely on natural resources for their livelihoods.

The HDI data showed conspicuously low rates compared to the actual situation on the ground. Where many of the indicators went under-reported: adult literacy was at 46.5 %, primary school enrolment at 84.7 % and Under-Five mortality at 103 per 1000, and life expectancy at 51 years. There was a 6% growth in public spending in education and health from 2006 to 2009.

HDI: conceptual and methodological

That the development process of the last 45 years have failed in most developing countries is wrong. Rather, judged by real human development indicators it has succeeded greatly as average life expectancy has increased by more than 16 years, adult literacy by over 40 years, and per capita nutritional levels more than 20 per cent and child



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UNDP Resident Representative, Ms. Chinwe M. Dike with Participants at the Development Forum

mortality rates have been halved.

Although the development in the world has been uneven, the fact remains that in the past forty years, developing countries have achieved the level of human progress that took nearly a century to accomplish.

The HDI considers some factors and ignores others. The problem cannot be fixed by including more factors into the numerical index, since any addition is bound to reduce the importance of the others already included in the variables. Critics ask for a rightful place for happiness, security, togetherness; they emphasise the consideration of *capabilities* and *functioning*—what a person has been able to accomplish and what means they had used to do so. This is more than just about the rise and fall of incomes.

Growth, sustainability, inclusiveness and governance

This must be given a holistic and integrative character towards achieving the core principles of equity, productivity and efficiency, participation and empowerment and sustainability.

Growth is typically associated with the steady progress in poverty reduction that springs from rises in incomes, and from countries being able to spend more on

health and education. Changes in poverty result from upward changes from negative growth and inequality. Policies affecting income distribution are therefore the catalysts to boost poverty reduction.

The growth rate of real GDP in The Gambia over the period 1995-2010, which is around 4.5% on average, has been the 12th highest among non-oil exporting countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa region. While The Gambia is not measured as being on track to halve poverty by 2015, it is set to reduce hunger by half by that MDG 1 deadline.

The Gambia is classified as a low human development country, ranked 168 out of 187 countries surveyed in the 2011 Human Development Report. It lacks the inclusive participation of stakeholders and mechanisms for the implementation and M&E of national strategies, policies and budget programmes to achieve inclusive growth, economic transformation and job creation. It suffers from low efficiency in policy palling and execution, leading to ineffective translation of public budgets into inclusive growth, economic transformation and job creation.

The element of sustainability is crucial in the development equation.

Environmental sustainability

implies development without the endangering of the natural resource base and the biodiversity of the region, and without affecting the resource base of future generations. It is similar to financial sustainability which refers to the way in which development is financed and the impact over time: development should not lead countries into debt traps nor deplete their future reserves.

Inclusive growth is defined as growth that is sustained over several years (at least over three decades), is broad based across economic sectors, and creates productive employment opportunities for the majority of the country's population. The business environment must be favourable, natural resources efficiently managed and that is equality of opportunity through basic education, health and infrastructure.

Well-being depends on diverse factors such as freedom to choose within an enabling political, economic, and legal environment. The demand was for more people-centred approaches to governance with participatory democracy, encouraging the institution of such cultures as referenda, voting rights, popular consultation and other forms of grassroots decision making.



Participants at the Development Forum

The audience: Comments and Q & A

Question: Why did it take the UN sixty years to begin considering bringing people to the centre of the development process? Considering that dictators around the world were being removed for failing to deliver to the people, why should people continue to tolerate the United Nations?

Answer 1: The UN evolved from the dominant three-index measurement of development of the early days. When the UN was beginning to address, much like a grandiose Peace Corps, issues of well-digging and such to focus on the poorest of the poor, it began having specialised agencies taking over specific roles on its behalf. The UNDP became a main conduit for UN delivery to the system of interventions dealing with poverty, etc.

Then came Haq, thankfully from the Third World setting, and provided new insights to development that is now dominating the world thinking on the subject. The concern of this Forum is to see if there is another Haq around so that a new thinking would develop. Otherwise, until there is another Haq, the UN thinking is what we have on the table tonight.

Answer 2: The Haq thinking which improved upon the old paradigm with the coming of the HDI has been in place for 21 years. The UN has come full cycle in its direction to ensure that people are indeed at the centre. The MGDs are about people; infant mortality, education, and other programmes are about people. This Forum is set to look for possibilities for any improvement on the paradigm put forward by Haq.

Answer 3: It is that role of the UN after 21 years that we are looking at now. Whereas the old idea about development was about the education, income and health of the people, the thinking in the last twenty five years moved to work on inequality, gender, multi-dimensional poverty, MDG goals as indices in the effort to make people matter.

We need to look at different roles and responsibilities of the players in development. Some of us are expecting the UN to play the role of the state – and that won't work for anyone in Africa. In many developing countries it is clear to see that citizens—stakeholders—are leading their own agenda. The UN and other development partners are only giving support. The fundamental problem is that in Africa many countries are aid-dependent and believe that their external funding partners should dictate their policies and agendas. In fact, we can generate our own internal funding; Nigeria is a good example of a country not needing any external funding. But the question must be asked how many billions of dollars of resources are produced internally but not put to development programmes.

Question and Comment: Many organisations around the world talk about people without putting people in their operations in practice. Development projects about that insist on results in terms of physical structures and monetary gains, completely ignoring genuine human progress. What about spiritual development which would design education about the whole person and teaching and learning about how people feel about themselves? Why do they ignore children, for example, when the development of children means developing whole human beings? When we work with flawed data, the information deduced is flawed and so will be the development programmes that come out of that.

The term 'Inclusive' is not enough. We must engage people in their own development, not just include them. Children must be a focus in development. We talk about GDP etc. and we never address developing children into full human beings, first. The problem is not about growth; it is about sharing and not sharing only but about equitable sharing of the world's resources. It is easy to see that the wanton destruction going on in the world is caused by the reckless drive for continuous growth.

Answer: Inclusive growth is about who participates. From the evidence in Africa, children, women, youths, are all involved in the different target programmes crafted around people. We must re-examine the sources and sectors of growth to catalyse people from one level to another.

Question and Comment: Are the current paradigms relevant or not and do we need a new paradigm? Does the answer lie in Africa designing its own development module?

Answer: Africa cannot be an island unto itself. We have to learn what has works for others in their development and see what we can learn from them. Our fundamental problem in this area is leadership; not isolating political leadership but leadership across the social, political and cultural spectrum. We must use our heads in figuring out our modules. However, we do not need to reinvent the wheel. Europe had a Marshall Plan; other countries in Asia had their own models. We must keep in mind that Europe had the infrastructure of skills and the human resources waiting to carry out the Marshall Plan. All the ingredients must be there to use the financial input, which alone would be a waste as we have seen in many interventions in underdeveloped countries where the finance is pumped in and the infrastructure is not there to utilise it optimally. But, for Africa to find its own model, we must have quality leadership across the board. The quality of leadership counts in development. The implementation of policies and programmes is also crucial. Policies must be domestically generated and not imported. Africa's development strategy is desperately missing in its foundation; lack of basic infrastructure, too large an illiterate and unskilled people, unable to make use of the financial and other development inputs.

The new paradigm when we find it must also consider new indices to measure, for example, unemployment, happiness and other indicators that will influence a human development index.

Question: What parameters have you used to determine that The Gambia is not on track to meet the poverty and income targets of the DG1?

Answer: The simple indications are that The Gambia is meeting the nutrition target of MDG1 but is not doing enough to meet the income and employment targets of the goal. The information is out there for anyone to use. The system is the individual country of study must be set against the global figures and targets to find out how it is doing. In the case of The Gambia when the figures are set next to the global targets (the international poverty line) it is easy to see where the country falls given the information that it points out as indicators of its performance in all the areas under study.

Question and Comment: Coining words and catchy phrases to suit programmes can draw confusion. Putting people at the centre of development might not make sense when it is humans we are developing and not animals. People would then be at the beginning, the middle and the end of any discussion. We need to concentrate on 'responsible' human development, not development about nice cars and big houses. Some of the indices may not be valid in calculating who we are. What is an indicator for development—is the suicide rate in France or Japan, or homosexuality in Europe a sign of highly developed societies?

There is the recommendation that The Gambia is too small in size for any significant development of its own. But 'small' can be beautiful. The Gambia is doing better on the Index than many big countries with resources.

Answer: There are indicators set in the development paradigm and those are used to compare, for example, Africa and Asia. Those indices are widespread enough to be measurable. Suicide or homosexuality do not fall within the category of indicators or are not pervasive a human issue that they should become indicators. The information is there to compare Africa to Asia, North America, etc. Smaller countries could certainly strengthen their base with capacity and facilities by linking up in regional groupings to meet the gaps.

Question: How can a country deliver to its people while depending on funds provided by external partners who we know firmly believe in he who pays the piper calls the tune?

Answer: The state must be serious with its governance and administrative controls; it must work on quality principles and deliver even though the resources are bilateral or multilateral. Ethiopia receives significant amount of foreign aid but development in that country is dictated by local expertise that have a clear understanding of what Ethiopian development sets out to achieve. They tell the donors exactly what they would do with the funds and they get on doing it.

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