

EDITORIAL

DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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Whilst Pakistan is making significant improvements in macro-economics, infrastructures, industry, roads, information and communication; human development is somewhere somehow seems neglected. Indicators of livelihood, health, education, water & sanitation, nutrition & food security, hence decent livings are lagging far behind. State is showing its seriousness by developing poverty reduction strategies, income support programs, health insurance and other safety nets, yet the course of action calls for a stock taking. There are lot of expectations from the devolved system of local government to re-prioritize the social sector investments as well as expenditures. Women and youth need to be the mainstay to make them part of the overall development process, through proving education, employment and empowerment. All efforts of the government need to be sustained in order to be on track on the roadmap of sustainable development goals.

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The UNDP 2015 Human Development Report (HDR) is released last month presenting the most up to date data and highlighting the progress made in the context of work done around human development facets all over the world. The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure for assessing long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. Pakistan with a status of low human development still ranks 147 on Human Development Index and this too is consistent for the last 5 years.¹

Henceforth, snapshot of Pakistan becomes imperative to be analysed whilst our political leadership claims its development initiatives as remarkable with the trickling down effects on a common man with respect to levels of poverty, standards of living, status of women, and improving social indicators of health and education. UNDP reports are full of glaring discordances.

This narrative is to do a stock taking of the account that has been presented in the HDR 2015, which draws all its data from government surveys and statistics such as Demographic & Health Surveys, Pakistan Poverty Assessment, Pakistan Living Standards Measurement Survey, and Multiple Indicators Clusters Surveys etc. Some conspicuous facts from the HDR 2015 show that:

- a) Government of Pakistan is silent on issues of child labour and domestic violence, and presents a state of denial, so no exact data could be reported.
- b) Around 46% people suffer from multi-dimensional poverty in Pakistan which means that they not only live below USD 1.25 a day, but this large proportion of population is disadvantaged of schooling, food, safe drinking water and a decent shelter.

- c) In terms of human displacements because of variety of conflicts, Pakistan stands with nations like Congo, Iraq, Nigeria, Sudan and Ukraine.
- d) Around 80% women in Pakistan do not have a bank account which is an indicator of access to finance and reflection of dismal state of gender inequality.
- e) Life expectancy has increased all over the world, owing to the advancement in the field of medicine, rising awareness and information, and literacy levels. In Pakistan, one can imagine to live around 66 years only at the time of birth.
- f) Mean years of schooling one expects to get in Pakistan is 5 years at the most; of which only 19% girls would get to a secondary school. So inequalities and disparities in life expectancy, education attainments are also quite significant across the social economic quintiles.
- g) Maternal mortality ratio though declined from 276 to 170/100,000 live births, yet it is unacceptably high as compared with many neighbouring and regional countries.
- h) With a population of 185 million increasing with a growth rate 1.7-1.9%, it might reach 230 million in 2030, and may surpass countries like Brazil and Indonesia at this pace. The population momentums which remained uncontrolled for quarter of a century will now slowdown in another quarter or so. So the state of affairs is not good despite lowered down fertility rate.
- i) A mere 2.5% of GDP spent on education for the last several years has eventually given us a modest literacy rate of 55% only.
- j) Other reason for standing on low HDI is huge debt burden on the country for which 23% of the total GNI is held for debt stocking and servicing.
- k) A country with bleak indicators of human development spends only 0.3% on research

which is critical to understand the determinants and factors for this slow human development progress.

- l) Constitution of 1973 of Islamic Republic of Pakistan recognizes some important responsibilities of state such as education, health and well-being, safety and security of citizens of Pakistan regardless of any discrimination. However, HDR underlines that 53% citizens of Pakistan are satisfied with the quality of education; merely 39% are satisfied with the quality of health care; 57% are satisfied with the standard of living in the country; and only half of them feel safe to live in the country.

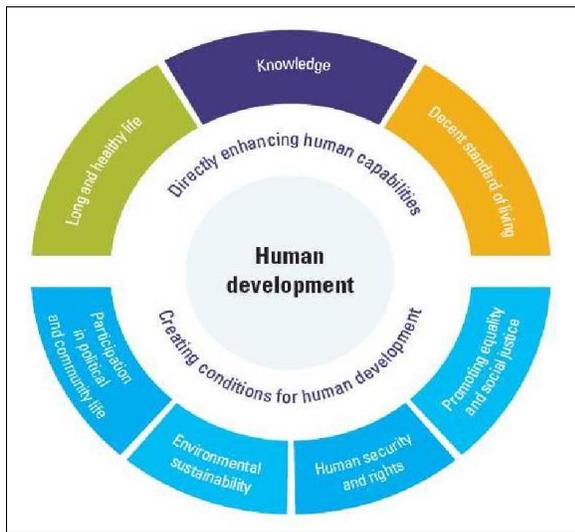


Figure-1: Dimensions of Human Development. HDR 2015

Some overarching issues that the HDR 2015 alluded to include focusing on the status of women and giving them the power of decision making, bringing them into the mainstream economy, and engendering the markets of opportunities for them. Healthcare is also a market, comprising the health care providers as well as the health consumers.² Both sides need a women friendly environment to work towards health related sustainable development goal-3, hence fortifying the outcomes of goal-5 of gender equality. Pakistan is already short of human resources in health, and more so faces an immense shortage of female employees in the health sector.³

Another dimension focused in HDR 2015 is

about the environment sustainability and human interaction with the environment, posing challenges and threats to the climate and in return to the human health in the respective regions. Access to clean water and sanitation, using clean energy sources, responsible consumption and production, climate action, and life on land are few more SDGs which are going to produce better human development indices in the years to come.⁴ Government and other non-state entities will have to join hands for a concerted action to preserve the environment and tackle the challenges of climate change.

Silver lining however is there and visible. Initiatives of the government like Benazir Income Support Programme and National Health Insurance Scheme⁵ are likely to make an impression on the state of poverty, women subjugation, unemployment and health care seeking. Political commitment and continuity of the policies however would be an utmost pre-condition.⁶ Or else, all sorts of development sans human development will be a pseudo development, leading to further aggravation of fragility and vulnerability in the lives of marginalized, poor and vulnerable segments of population of Pakistan. With this state of affairs, perhaps this is an opportune time for the legislators, policy makers, political leadership and other custodians of this country to redefine the priorities, investments and course of action. And at the dawn of 2016, it is immeasurably crucial to convert this set of circumstances into a journey of hope.

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