

Evaluating Methods of Measuring Human Development



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Abstract

The term development in social arena is broadly used to determine the social condition of the citizens residing in a particular geographical area. All efforts of the government and civil society are directed to achieve and accomplish the socially desired goals. Our institutions i.e. government, political, social have been putting their efforts to gain the optimum for the welfare of the masses in general and weaker sections in particular. While working for the development, the institutions have also invented methods of measuring the development of human. For years development agents from different economic and political sectors have measured human development in terms of per capita income, GDP and the growth in industrial sector. As a result great deal of national development activities focused on economic growth and neglected the other important dimensions of development. Although, it is impossible to deny the constructive role of economic growth in the progress of human society but merely the presence of economic growth cannot yield the expected results of human development. The present paper discusses the different approaches introduced across the world for measuring the human development. Here, we would discuss in brief three approaches of measuring human development, namely Traditional GNP Approach, Human Development Index Approach formulated by United Nation Development Program (UNDP) and Under 5 Mortality Rate (U5MR) approach adapted by United Nations Child Emergency Fund (UNICEF).

Keywords: Human Development, Human Development Index, U5MR.

Introduction

In the year 1990 the first human development report was published by the United Nations, it was a new approach for the development world for evaluating the wellbeing of human. The main thrust of this approach is to enhance the quality of human being rather than expanding economic well being. The human development approach mainly focuses on people, opportunity and choices.

Traditional Gross National Product (GNP) Per Capita Approach

It was realized that economic progress will ultimately improve the condition of human beings, therefore efforts to economic progress were made and development measured in terms of Gross National Product of that country. But soon it was realized that countries having poorly performed in economic terms and specially in terms of GNP are performing well in some of the social sectors. For example Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe both have per capita GNP of less than \$ 600, but both managed to provide 90 percent of their children with at least four years of primary school and Brazil with a per capita GNP of almost \$ 3000 a year cannot reach even half that figure.

These, contradictory facts tells much about GNP as a measuring tool of human development is not sufficient and the need to think beyond is imperative. It is not necessary that all the GNP that a country produces will be diverted into social sectors.

Human Development Index Approach

The human development index approach provides alternative to GNP approach for measuring human development. The human development approach developed by UNDP in the 1990 is a composite of three basic aspects namely longevity, access to resources and education. Knowledge is measured by schooling (one third weight), access to resources is measured by GDP and purchasing power parity and longevity is measured by life expectancy.

Under 5 Mortality Rate (U5MR) Approach

UNICEF has designed this measurement tool, it consider human child development as prior to any other development. The under-five

mortality rate (U5MR) is the probability (expressed as a rate per 1,000 live births) of a child born in a specified year dying before reaching the age of five if subject to current age-specific mortality rates.

The U5MR has several advantages. First, it measures an end result of the development process rather than inputs such as school enrolment level etc. Second, the U5MR is known to be result of a wide variety of inputs: the nutritional health and the health knowledge of mothers, immunization etc. Third, the U5MR is less susceptible than, say, per capita GNP to the fallacy of the average. For these reasons, the U5MR is chosen by UNICEF as its single most important indicator of the state of nation's children.

Human Development Index (HDI)

UNDP gave serious considerations to the fact that in centre of all developmental activities should be people and decided to bring out reports on yearly basis since 1990 encompassing human dimension of development. The report therefore, proposed a new measure of development known as human development index. This index comprises three indicators: life expectancy, adult literacy and income expressed in dollars. The details of HDI approach has already discussed in the paper. Along with human development index UNDP also developed and issued other reports such as Human Poverty Index, Gender Related Development Index etc.

Human Poverty Index

Human development index measures overall progress in a country in achieving human development. It specially focuses on distribution of progress and measures the backlog of deprivation that still exists.

Gender Related Development Index

The gender related development index measures achievements in the same dimensions and variables as the human development index, but captures inequalities in achievement between men and women. It studies whether women can take active part in socio-economic and political life.

Quality of Life Index

Also known as 'where to be born index' attempts to measure which country will provide the best opportunities for healthy, safe and prosperous life in the years ahead. Against the objective determination of quality of life it depends on the subjective measurement. So along with all other element it also measures life satisfaction, the built environment, physical and mental health of people as

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well time they get for leisure and recreational activities.

World Happiness Report

It is published yearly by United Nations Sustainable Development Solution Network which study and rank the level of happiness among different nations across the world. It measures collective happiness and well being of population, as it is imperative to be satisfied and happy above all...It focuses on four pillars 1) Good Governance 2) Environmental Conservation 3) Sustainable and Equitable Socio Economic Development and 4) Preservation and Promotion of Culture.

Conclusion

We have discussed many ways of measuring human development from economic aspects like GDP, GNP and per capita income to the happiness report. The development of different measurement tools over the period of time also indicated our quest for generating effective design for measuring development. As development is subjective and qualitative as well as objective and quantitative in nature, it is hard to be measured. Therefore, it is recommended that any tool of measuring human development must be a comprehensive tool. Measurement must take into account the social, economic and political progress of the country/society. In addition to that measurement of mental, physical and spiritual health, time for free activities, recreational time and happiness should considered as parameter for development.

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