

Thematic Issues in Human Development Reports: An Analysis

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Abstract

Healthy and long life, educational accomplishments and decent standard of living are quintessential elements of human development (HD). UNDP initiated an unprecedented process in 1990 and started preparing the Human Development Report (HDR) annually portraying the state of HD of countries of the world. This paper is an attempt to understand the concept of HD and its state during 1960-90. Besides, themes of HDRs from 1990-2020 have also been analyzed. It is discernible that in spite of glaring disparity of life expectancy, educational attainments and standard of living between North and South, the developing countries significantly improved their points on all the three components of HD during 1960-1990. The UNDP formulated themes concerning entire humanity during 1990-2020. The themes ranged from financing HD to people's participation, gender issues to eradication of poverty, globalization with human face to human rights, deepening of democracy to global water crisis, fighting climate change to HD for everyone and HD and the anthropocene. Most of the countries formulated their policies and customized plans and programs according to these themes. However, There is an urgent need to manage economic growth otherwise it could be detrimental to human development.

Keywords: Human development, education, Poverty and inequality, equality inclusion.

Introduction

Thematic issues in Human Development Reports: An analysis

Landscape of human development has witnessed a long drawn process of formation and reconstruction by social scientists from Aristotle to Adam Smith. However, owing to intensive efforts of some experts this concept found definitive articulation in the Human Development Report (HDR) 1990. Subsequent annual sequels of the report have left a profound impact on the policies, programs and plans of countries across the globe. The approach of human development concerns advancing the richness of human life, rather than the richness of the economy in which human beings live. Human development (HD)¹ is an evolving idea, not a fixed, static set of precepts. And as the world changes, analytical tools and concepts will also continue to evolve. Yet the core insight at the center of the human development approach remains constant and as valid today as it was three decades ago: Development is ultimately best measured by its impact on individual lives. Thus it is the individual human being at world, national, provincial, district and any other micro administrative unit level who are at the centre of human developmental endeavors. But here the question arises whether after three decades of publication of Human Development Reports by the United Nation Development Programme, has the global organization remained focused on its core issue i.e. impact on individual and or richness of individual? Let's explore and analyze it.

Objectives

This paper has been developed around the objectives as given below;

1. To understand concept of Human Development
2. To compare the state of HD in the North and South during 1960-1990
3. To analyze themes of HDRs from 1990-2020

Data and information for this paper has been elicited from various books, write ups and HDRs -1990 - 2020. Brief description of all the 28 HD reports and their analysis portray bird's eye view of changing thematic issues in human development reports, changing scenario of state of HD across the globe, major areas of concern which need to be addressed.

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Concept of Human Development

Human Development² is a dynamic, multidimensional and ever evolving concept. For a better comprehension of concept, dynamics and dimensions of HD, brief description is as under;

Meaning of Human Development: Concept of human development evolved from fundamental realities and concrete situations prevailing among countries across the globe. It was a stage of churning realism and stirring the prevailing notions and coming out of obsession for income and indifference towards educational accomplishments & standard of living. The data coming forth from census, governmental and other reports and research endeavors unearthed that a group of countries with modest income had high levels of educational and health attainments and some other countries with high level of income had modest educational and health accomplishments. The debate for defining human development in light of such findings was felt more than ever before.

Now the question arises as to what human development is? In fact it^{is} a process of enlarging people's choices³. In principle, these choices can be infinite and change over time. But at all levels of development, the three essential ones are for people to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living... Additional choices, highly valued by many domain experts, range from political, economic and social freedom to opportunities for being creative and productive, and enjoying personal self-respect and guaranteed human rights.

This description makes it amply clear that human development deals with 'enlarging people's choices'. Here emphasis has been given to the choices of the people. But HD is a process, a sequence of events producing some result. It is a dynamic phenomenon and not a static event or incident. The three fundamental bases of HD as emerged from wide ranging debates and discussions are as given below;

Healthy and long life: In order to understand how to lead a healthy and long life, researchers from Harvard⁴ conducted a massive study on about 120000 medical professionals observing them for about three decades i.e. between 1980-2014 observed on the following five parameters;

1. Healthy diet
2. Healthy physical activity
3. Healthy body weight
4. Non-smoking
5. Moderate drinking

The information unearthed that just one healthy habit (It didn't matter which one) extended life expectancy by two years in both men and women. The data revealed that the more healthy habits the longer the lifespan people enjoyed. Thus a healthy and longer life needs a healthy diet and healthy lifestyle.

But here the question arises that is there no other side of reality? Excess of just one of the five factors has the potential to overshadow all other four factors. Even if the majority of the abovementioned factors are favorable, one or two or some of these factors could wreck havoc.

Acquiring knowledge: It is a well established fact that the quest for acquiring knowledge is ingrained in human beings. Reading, writing, listening, observing, experimenting, clearing concepts, intuition and learning from mistakes are some of the methods to acquire knowledge. Maatsuura⁵ emphasized that since knowledge and information being crucial in tackling challenges; it is UNESCO's duty to intensify earnest efforts in advancing educational accomplishments. Optimum utilization of information and communication technology (ICT) is a must as it has successfully widened and globalized the creation, acquisition and sharing of knowledge. Unequal access to ICT has created a worldwide digital divide. It has also created a knowledge divide and gaps between North and South, countries, men and women, rich and poor and literate and illiterate

Therefore, UNESCO proposed following four principles to achieve inclusive knowledge based societies:

1. Quality education for all
2. Universal access to information and knowledge

3. Respect for cultural and linguistic diversity
4. Freedom of expression – both in cyberspace and traditional printed media.

These four principles inspired the recommendations of the UNESCO World Report 'Towards Knowledge Societies'.

Thus acquiring a quality education by all the people irrespective of nationality, caste, class, creed, sex and race is a must but it is also important to respect cultural diversity of the people and their freedom of expression.

UNDP measures educational accomplishments on the basis of literacy rate and number of years of schooling. However it is not just the number of years invested in acquiring education but quality of education received that is important. Moreover, educational institutions have been considered to be the sole sources of educational pursuits. There are other informal ways through which people are educated and information is disseminated. These have not been given any weight age in this component.

Access to resources: It is essential to have access to resources to the individuals and the people to ensure a decent standard of living. The UNDP in its Human Development Report 1993 described decent standard of living as the 'the capability of living a healthy life, guaranteeing physical and social mobility, communicating and participating in the life of the community (including consumption).' Thus DSL involves living a healthy life with freedom of mobility (social and physical) and participation in community life.

Rao, N.D. & Min, J.⁶ define decent standard of living as a set of material conditions that people everywhere ought to have, no matter but their conception of good life be. DSL has been proposed to be an important basis for resource allocation. But country specific resource conditions are an important factor here. DSL requires provision of sufficient resources to purchase essential commodities. For purchasing, minimum wages, income and its utilization are important factors.

The formula to workout standard of living on the basis of averages for a country does not appear to be portraying a proper picture of richness of the individuals inhabiting a country because income of billionaires to the people living below poverty line is combined to find out per capita income.

Other bases of HD: Following are some additional basis of human development which may also be called as additional choices;

1. Political, economic and social freedoms to opportunities for being creative and productive
2. Enjoying personal self respect
3. Guaranteed human rights Self respect and variety of human rights are necessary conditions and ingredients of HD.

Human Development during 1960-2020

For better comprehension HD from second half of the twentieth century onwards can broadly be classified as under;

1. Human Development from 1960 to 1990
2. Human Development from 1990 to 2020

Comparative analysis of Human Development in North and South during 1960 to 1990⁷

Before examining and analyzing human development during 1960-90 i.e. three decades immediately before the first Human Development Report saw light of the day, it is worthwhile to know about the North-South divide which will make it easier to have a global perspective of HD. The North-South represents socio-economic and political divisions of the globe between the North and the South. This global divide gained popularity during the second half of twentieth century onwards. The North includes the developed countries of Western Europe, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, Singapore, Japan and South Korea whereas the South comprises the developing countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America, Caribbean and Pacific islands. Thus the North comprises the First world and much of the second world whereas the South constitutes of countries previously known as third world.

Component-wise comparative analysis of HD in North and South during three decades different headings is as given below;

Life Expectancy: It is one of the main constituents of human development and an indicator of the state of health of a nation or group of countries. Although life expectancy in the South increased by one third during 1960-87, yet it was 80% of the North and was also 12 years shorter than the North which reflects North-South divide on account of life expectancy. Maternal mortality rate in the South was 12 times higher than what it was in the North during this period. It appears that the South being late riser and lagging behind in the process of development of science and technology, infrastructure and capacity building and resultant higher rate of infant, child and maternal mortality rates might be the main reasons for lower life expectancy and lower levels of HD.

Health: In developing countries more than 60% of the population had access to health services and 2 billion people had access to safe portable water at the end of nineteen eighties. However, 1.5 billion people were deprived of primary health facilities and 1.75 billion had even no access to safe drinking water in the South. As regards children, owing to a steep rise in the coverage of immunization, the child mortality rate i.e. children below the age of five years, was halved during 1960-1988. However, a whopping 14 million children used to die every year, out of which 3 million would die owing to diseases which could be immunized before turning 5. It is indicative of huge deprivation in the South at the end of nineteen eighties.

Education: Educational accomplishments are an essential part of human development. The South had about 1.4 billion literate people as compared to 1 billion in the North during the nineteen eighties. However, it was heartening to note that about 100 million children in the South were out of schools and as many as 900 million adults were illiterate. Literacy rate in South Asia which includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives and Bhutan was 41% and 48% in sub-Saharan Africa.

Income: It determines standard of living. Per capita income increased at the rate of 3% during 1965-1980 in the South but an average decline of 2.4% in Sub-Saharan Africa and 0.7 in Latin America was witnessed during the nineteen eighties. Besides, more than a billion people still lived in absolute poverty. Overall per capita average calorie supply increased from 90% to 107% of the total requirement during 1965-1985. In spite of that, every sixth person in the South would go hungry daily.

The main reason of the sizeable population inhabiting India living in abject poverty is the fact that the British took away \$45 trillion⁸ (\$45, 00,000 i.e. about double the GDP of USA) from India in today's value during its rule in India otherwise per capita income in India could have been much higher. One of the main reasons for low income or even low HD in many other countries of the South is their colonization by the colonizers like Britain and looting of their resources.

Freeman et al.(2020)⁹ in their study making comparative analysis of life expectancy between Ethiopia, Brazil and USA observed that investment in public health care, maternal and child health, and universal health coverage have a strong role to play in achieving positive and equitable population health outcomes – in all countries regardless of their wealth. Thus income may or may not be associated with educational accomplishments.

Analysis of thematic issues and Human Development reports (1990-2020)

When Human Development Report 1990 was being prepared, several countries were undergoing the process of unprecedented changes. In such circumstances, efforts were being made to save the people from being reduced to a single dimension as economic creatures. In such circumstances the UNDP embarked on exploring the underlying cause of how Gross Domestic Product translates or fails to translate growth into human development as some societies had achieved high levels of HD with modest levels of per capita income and vice versa. It is argued that was the purpose of UNDP to prepare or preach any model of development? However it was found that the global body wanted to make the experience of various societies available to one and all.

When UNDP launched Human Development Report (HDR) 1990 on 1 May 1990, mankind would not have imagined that this is going to be an annual feature for decades to follow and would be giving a bird's eye view about the state of human development of the countries across the globe. Information compressed in Table 1 gives a glimpse of themes of human development reports published by the UNDP during the last decade (1990-2000) of the twentieth century.

Concept and measurement in Human Development (HDR 1990): The theme of this report was 'Concept and Measurement in Human Development.' This very first HDR clearly explained the concept of human development. It states that the people¹⁰ were the real wealth of a nation. Further the basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for the people to enjoy long, healthy and creative life. Primary objective of development is to benefit the people. However, variables viz. better health services, secure livelihood, better working conditions, leisure time, a sense of participation in socio-cultural and eco-political activities of respective communities are highly valuable attributes of human development. As for as measurement of human development is concerned, the HDR report 1990 suggests that for the time being the HD¹¹ should focus on the three essential elements of human life-longevity, knowledge and decent living standards. Out of these three components, the first one i.e. longevity is to be measured in terms of life expectancy at birth. For the component of knowledge, literacy offers an objective picture and is also the first step towards educational accomplishment and acquisition of knowledge. The third component of HD is a decent living for which command over resources is required. Owing to a variety of resources and difficulty in their identification and quantification, per capita income was taken as an indicator of command on resources.

Table 1 Human Development Reports and themes (1990-2000)

1.	Concept and measurement in Human Development	1990
2.	Financing Human Development	1991
3.	Global Dimensions in Human Development	1992
4.	People's participation	1993
5.	New dimensions of human security	1994
6.	Gender and Human Development	1995
7.	Economic growth and Human Development	1996
8.	Human Development to eradicate poverty	1997
9.	Consumption for Human Development	1998
10.	Globalization with human face	1999
11.	Human rights and Human Development	2000

Financing human development (HDR 1991)¹²: It has been observed that a significant amount of current spending is inefficiently used. It calls for restructuring of national budgets and international aid in such a way so that maximum human development could be achieved. In view of it, the theme 'financing human development' was finalized. It is through prioritizing spending that accelerated human development can be achieved.

Global dimensions of human development (HDR 1992)¹³: The HDR 1992 was an attempt in placing global markets in proper perspective. Stress was laid in opening the markets for all people crafting regulatory framework and supplementing it by judicious social policy action. State as well as the market have a very large and irreplaceable role to play in financing human development.

Thus this report has examined the role of the global markets and the way they meet or even fail to meet the needs of the poorest people of the world.

People's participation (HDR 1993)¹³: The HDR 1993 recognized the fact that our world was still a world of difference where more than a billion people still languished in abject poverty and women, though comprising the majority population of the world, earn half as much as men. Urbanites enjoy the privileges of having double the opportunities and available social services than their rural counterparts.

New dimensions of human security (HDR 1994)¹³: The HDR 1994 introduced and elaborated the concept of human security. In fact human security deals with the security and development of the people and not with the security of the territories through arms. The report has propagated sustainable human development through restructuring global institutions. For promotion of human security, the report has emphasized an agreement to earmark 20 percent of the national budget and 20 percent of the foreign for human development. It also advocated establishment of an Economic Security Council.

Gender and human development (HDR 1995)¹³: As a word of caution the report states, **'human development if not engendered would be endangered.'** Analyzing the persistent gap between expanding capabilities and limited opportunities for women, the report has introduced concepts for ranking countries. These being Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) and Gender Development Index (GDI), could be achieved through revamping economic and institutional arrangements. Besides, a minimum share of 30% for women in decision making positions at national level could catapult their position in the GDI. It merits mention here that as a measure to empower women, the government of India had already reserved 33% of the seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Municipalities through constitution amendments 73 and 74 which were passed in 1992. Thus at the local level in local self government, if not at the national level, one third of the women got opportunities to take part in the decision making process throughout the country.

Economic growth and human development (HDR 1996)¹³: The report distinguishing between economic growth and HD makes a clear statement, **'Human Development is the end- economic growth is the means.'** The report has categorically stated that quality of economic growth is as important as its quantity of reduction of poverty, human development and sustainability. It has been argued that if economic growth is not properly managed, it can be **jobless, voiceless, ruthless, rootless and futureless and detrimental to human development.** The HDR identifies employment as critical for translating the benefits of economic growth into the lives of people.

Human development to eradicate poverty (HDR 1997)¹³: The report states that the world is endowed with sufficient resources and know-how which can eradicate poverty from the world in less than a generation. The report views poverty as a denial of choices and opportunities for living a decent life. It lays stress on embarking on action in the areas like gender equality, globalization and democratic governance. Eradication of poverty necessitates removal of barriers that deny choices and opportunities, building assets for the poor, investing in health and education. Furthermore, it is feasible, affordable and a moral imperative to remove absolute poverty in the first decade of the 21st century.

Consumption for human development (HDR 1998)¹³: The investigations have unearthed that **presently more people are better fed and housed than ever before.** However ever expanding consumptions have put strain on the environment. Globalization has been integrating markets around the world, but it is also creating inequalities. There is an urgent need **to think globally and act locally.**

Globalization with human face (HDR 1999)¹³: The report argues that the present era of globalization driven by competitive markets is outpacing the governance of markets. Globalization is a process of integrating economy, technology, governance and culture. By way of shrinking space and time, globalization has opened the door of opportunities. Due to globalization, the 1990s has witnessed **fast increasing concentration of income and resources among the people, corporations and countries.** Therefore, there is an urgent

need to develop mechanisms to boost globalization with human face i.e. with ethics-less violation of human rights, equity-less disparity with and between nations, inclusion-less marginalization of people and countries, human security-less instability of societies and less vulnerability of people, sustainability-less environmental destruction, development-less poverty and deprivation, not more of any of these factors.

Human rights (HDR 2000)¹³: Both human rights and human development share a common purpose which is to secure for every human being freedom and dignity. In fact human rights are an integral part of development and development is a means to realize human rights. Ultimately, ensuring human freedom is the aim of human rights and human development.

It is discernible from the Human Development Index developed in the very first HDR, 1990 that it is concerned only with the improvement in just the basic capabilities of the people. It is not a comprehensive measure of human development or well being of individuals. Srinivasan¹¹ has rightly argued that wrong variables have been used in the HDI and these are not reflecting human development accurately. The HDI portrayed oversimplification by HD by following merely three indicators and leaving many other important ones.

It is strange to have a common and simplistic theme (**Financing human development –HDR 1991**) for all the countries of the world. Requirements of financing human development are different for developed and developing countries. Priorities of the highly advanced countries like the USA and Scandinavian countries (Norway, Sweden and Denmark) are different than the ones like several big developing countries of Asia and Africa including India who have been trying different ways and means to enhance literacy rates, to fulfill bare minimum needs of their citizens and provide health facilities.

As regards theme of 'People Participation (HDR 1993)', when a large number of ethnic groupings still live like isolated islands and nationalities even in their own countries and when hundred of tribal communities are still living a primitive lifestyle, and millions of people are deprived of social mobility and are discriminated on the basis of their race and caste, boosting people's participation appears to be an utopian idea. Further, a word of caution, people's impatient urge to participate in democratic processes has to be nurtured properly in the national and global frameworks. If it goes uncontrolled it has the potential to divide countries into different sovereign nations.

The new dimension of human security (HDR 1994) in itself is a plausible idea. No denying the fact that security of citizens is one of the main responsibilities of nations. But how would it be calculated for HDI? Even after making a whopping 20% of budgetary allocations for this cause are unlikely to earn proportionate points in HDI.

Human development is going to increase people's choices (HDR 1995). But how come 30 percent participation of women in decision making would change the ranking of a country in the HDR is again a question mark. The themes of HDR 1996, 1997 and 1998 appear to be improving the position of a nation in the HDR.

Fast increasing concentration of income and resources among certain people, organizations and countries and resultant conspicuous consumption and violations of human rights as is evident from HDR 1999 and 2000, is counterproductive for human development of a large number of the people across the globe and countries. But since the HDI calculated HD on the basis of averages, would a better state of human rights and or more pauperization of large populations within countries change ranking in HDI. The point is there is an urgent need to increase the number of components of HDI and give weight age different points instead of present system of giving same weight age to all the three components of HD.

Changing themes in HDRs during 2001-2010

When the third millennium dawned the UNDP already had more than a decade of human development report publications. The global organization had widely publicized and enlightened humankind about the urgent need to focus on human development across the globe. Twenty first century came with new hopes,

aspirations, commitments and unfinished tasks to continue vigorously unfinished task of human development.

Table: 2 Human Development Report and themes (2001-2010)¹³

1.	Information and Communications Technologies	2001
2.	Deepening Democracy in a fragmented world	2002
3.	Millennium Development Goals: A compact among nations to end human poverty	2003
4.	Cultural liberty in Today's diverse world	2004
5.	International cooperation at a crossroads: Aid, trade and security in an unequal world	2005
6.	The global water crisis	2006
7.	Fighting climate change: Human solidarity in a divided world	2007/ 8
8.	Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and development	2009
9.	The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development	2010

Information and Communications Technologies (HDR 2001): Focus of the HDR was to find out better ways and means to capitalize on information and communication technology (ICT) and biotechnology for human development. The 20th century's gains in human development largely came from technological breakthroughs and point out the fact that the technology divide does not have to follow the income divide which presently exists between North and South.

Deepening democracy (HDR 2002): Realizing the fact that politics cannot be divorced from human development as various types of political institutions from local & national to international levels shape human development, this HDR focused on deepening democracy in a fragmented world. There is a need to widen and deepen democracy to safeguard the freedom and dignity of all the people.

Poverty and equality (HDR 2003): Emanating from Millennium Declaration 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) , apart from others, bind countries to do more for arresting inadequate incomes, widespread hunger gender inequality, illiteracy, environmental degradation and also work for health care and provision of clean water. For this purpose the report offers an action plan to reduce debt and increase aid and transfer of technology to the poor and developing countries.

Cultural liberty (HDR 2004): Promotion of cultural freedoms so that the people could speak their language, practice their religion and shape their culture was the main focus of HDR 2004. HD allows people to lead the life they choose. On the other hand the report rejects the premise that cultural differences lead to social, economic and political differences.

Inequality, aid and international cooperation (HDR 2005): Taking stock of MDG, this report identified extreme inequality between and within countries as the main barrier to human development. The report warns that humankind has only one choice i.e. to start a decade for development with financial resources, technology and capacity building to end poverty. Else we are ready to face utter failure of human development which would emerge in the form of violent conflicts, violation of human rights and threats to peace and tranquility.

The global water crisis (HDR 2006): The report continues to frame debate on one of the most pressing challenges-the availability of water, humankind is facing today. The fact that about 2 million children die every year for want of a glass of clean water and adequate sanitation. Gravity of the situation can be gauged from

the fact that 1.2 billion people on the globe don't have access to safe water. The report endeavors to find out the scope of international cooperation to resolve cross-water conflicts and tensions in water management.

Climate change (HDR 2007/8): The report has expressed serious concerns about climate change. No denying the fact that the poor countries and vulnerable citizens are going to suffer the earliest. But the wealthiest countries and their citizens will also not be immune from the irreversible ecological catastrophe. The world is endowed with sufficient financial resources and technological capabilities. But the more important factor is a sense of urgency and collective and sustained effort. Ecological interdependence continues in the divided world. It is the historical responsibility of the rich and advanced nations to initiate and speed up the process of cuts in the greenhouse gas emissions.

Overcoming barriers of human mobility and development (HDR 2009): The major driver for human movement within countries and across borders is unequal distribution of resources and capabilities. There is strong evidence which suggests that migration is positively associated with human development as it opens new avenues of income, better education and health services. However, it also has a negative side. Migration occurring owing to threats and denial of choice adversely affects human development. This report elaborates the way human development could be a means to redress the issues which erode potential benefits of mobility of the people.

The real wealth of nations: Pathways to HD (HDR 2010): HDR 1990, the very first report had the opening line, a statement, 'People are the real wealth of a nation' left a profound impact on the policies and programs around the world.

After two decades of focus on ITC (HDR 2001), developing countries like India have observed the utility of ICT during corona curfew periods in education and other service sectors more than ever before. However, the digital divide between North and South and between rural and urban areas within countries has reinforced the need to gear up ICT facilities. Not giving representation even to demographic billionaires like India in the UN Security Council as a permanent member the theme appears to be more a preaching than practicing to call for deepening democracy in HDR 2002. Abject poverty and high absolute number of poor people particularly in sub-Saharan and South Asian countries and frightening inequality of global wealth distribution indicates a worrisome situation though 'Poverty and Equality' was the main theme of HDR 2003 and more or less the similar in HDR 2005.

As for the water crisis (HDR 2006), Climate Change (2007/8) and Overcoming barriers of human mobility and development (HDR 2009), the issue of potable water still continues to be a big issue particularly in the developing countries like India. Besides, frequent wildfires, longer durations of droughts and higher frequency and duration of hurricanes, cyclones and typhoons are indicative of the fact that much more is needed to arrest climate change. As regards overcoming barriers of human mobility and development (HDR 2009), migration has posed a lot of unprecedented challenges to the economy, polity, law and order etc by the Mexican to USA and Bangladesh and others to India.

Regarding HDR 2021 it is worth mentioning that huge data coming forth through empirical investigations establish two points. One, there is no single formula for sustainable development. Two, long term gains can be achieved without consistent economic growth. The people continue to be the real wealth of nations. Political freedoms, empowerment and human security still continue to be a broader agenda for research and response of mankind.

Main themes of HDRs during 2011-2020¹³

Brief description of HDRs during 2011-2020 is as under;

Environment and energy (HDR 2011)¹³: The HDR contends that the data reveals that human development has improved particularly in poor countries during recent years. However, it has been projected as a reversal of trends if environmental deterioration and social inequalities continue to intensify. The report emphasizes that a healthy environment is a human right and outlines that there is an urgent need for the quest of equality and sustainability wherein a better future for all lies.

The rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World (HDR 2013)¹³:

The 'Rise of the South' during previous decades was a profound shift in the global dynamics of development. The report identifies more than 40 countries, mainly among them being China, India, Brazil, Indonesia and South Africa which have witnessed acceleration in human development during last decade.

Sustaining development (HDR 2014)¹³: The report takes a serious view of the ongoing vulnerability that threatens human development endeavors. There is an urgent need to systematically address it by making suitable changes in policies so that progress is equitable and sustainable. Thus the report focused on reducing vulnerability and building resilience to attain sustaining human development.

Table: 3 Human Development Report and themes (2011-2020)

1.	Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All	2011
2.	The Rise and the South: Human Progress in the Diverse World	2013
3.	Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience	2014
4.	Work for Human Development	2015
5.	Human Development for everyone	2016
6.	Human Development: Indices and Indicators	2018
7.	Beyond income, beyond averages, beyond today: Inequalities in Human Development in the 21 st century	2019
8.	The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene	2020

Work for human development (HDR 2015)¹⁴: The report asserts that the concept of work when viewed from a human development perspective is broader and deeper than that of job and employment. In fact work gives the people a sense of dignity and worth as it ranges from voluntary work to creative expression and thus brings social cohesion at familial, community and societal levels. Work is closely associated with human development. While forced labor adversely affects HD satisfying and quality work enhances workers' skills and competencies.

Human development for everyone (HDR 2016)¹⁵: The report emphasizes on realization of full potential of all the people now and in the future. It makes a clear mention, 'Human development for everyone involves... collective capabilities, not only individual capabilities; voice and autonomy, not only well being; and inclusion, not only diversity.' Law of averages does not portray exact state of HD. Uplifting left out through a multi pronged strategy. It is time to join our hearts, heads and hands together to strive for peace and prosperity and seek balance between the people and the planet.

Human development indices and indicators (HDR 2018)¹⁶⁻¹⁷: This report gives a snapshot of the current state of human development and its long term trends across multiple dimensions for every nation. A Group of nations led by Norway exhibits very high levels of HD whereas several other countries including Niger, South Sudan have lowest scores in the measurement of human development index in health, education and income.

Inequalities in human development in the 21st century (HDR 2019)¹⁸: Inequalities have pushed many people in every country to the corners who have little prospect for a better future. The inequalities are roadblock in achieving desired sustainable development by 2030. The report has endeavored to explore inequalities in HD by going beyond income, beyond averages and beyond today.

Human Development and the Anthropocene (HDR 2020)¹⁹: Three decades ago the UNDP embarked on measuring progress in terms of human development and not merely using growth as its parameter. It has been observed that human activity has emerged as a dominant force. Citing some problematic zones viz. the climate crisis, collapse of biodiversity and acidification of oceans has been pointed out in the report that for the first time in human history the planet is not shaping the humans rather humans are knowingly shaping the planet. It is a new geological epoch, the age of humans-the Anthropocene. No denying the fact that humanity has achieved incredible progress, but Covid-19 pandemic exposed weaknesses in social, political and economic systems and threatened reversals in human development. We have to understand the fact that challenges of planetary and societal imbalance are intertwined.

Following points come forth from the themes of various human development reports from 1990-2020;

1. That while the first HDR described concepts and discussed problems in measuring human development.
2. All the HDRs have themes concerning entire humankind.

Analysis of HDRs, main findings and suggestions

The HDRs 1990-2000 discern as given below;

On observing that some societies had high levels of HD with modest levels of per capita income and vice versa, the UNDP endeavored to find out how Gross Domestic Product translates or fails to translate growth into human development. First HDR which saw light of the day in 1990 clearly stated that people were the real wealth of a nation. All efforts of development are required to have a primary objective, to benefit the people so that they could enjoy a long, healthy and creative life. However people in the majority of countries work for earning their livelihood not for creativity.

Not only in the North but also in the South housing the overwhelming majority of poor people, huge amounts of current spending are being used inefficiently on non-productive activities. Restructuration of national budgets and international financial aid and its proper execution for the desired purposes are of utmost importance. Today huge expenses are incurring on territorial security which could be used for human security and development.

Capabilities of the women, who comprise half of the world population, need to be utilized by making more opportunities available for them. However, the appeal of the HDRs to have a minimum share of 30% for women in positions of decision making at national level is a far cry. As a word of caution the UNDP states, **'human development if not engendered would be endangered.** Further, 'Human Development is the end- economic growth is the means,' but the opposite is happening within and among a large number of countries today.

Target to remove absolute poverty in the first decade of the 21st century in spite of being feasible, affordable and a moral imperative remains a noble idea even after the second decade though the world is endowed with sufficient resources and know-how which can eradicate poverty from the world in less than a generation. Eradication of poverty necessitates removal of barriers that deny choices and opportunities, building assets for the poor, investing in health and education. Conspicuous consumption by a significant number of countries and a vast chunk of population is counterproductive. Overspendings should be arrested to accelerate the pace of human development. If economic growth is not properly managed, it can be **jobless, voiceless, ruthless, rootless and futureless and detrimental to human development**

Today globalization is integrating economies, technologies, cultures and governance faster than ever before. But it has to have a human face in the form of less violation of human rights, less disparity, less marginalization, more human security and less vulnerability, less environmental destruction and less deprivation. Last decade of the twentieth century has shown faster increasing concentration of income and resources among the people, corporations and countries. Importance of human rights is being realized presently more than

ever before. In fact development is a means to realize human rights and human rights are means to ensure human freedoms.

HDRs 2001-2010 suggest that the 20th century's gains in human development largely came from technological breakthroughs. Existing income divide between North and South should be bridged with the help of technology. Besides, in order to safeguard freedoms and dignity of the people across the globe there is an urgent need to deepen and widen democratic institutions in the fragmented world. Humankind today is plagued with widespread hunger, inequality between male and female, abject poverty, non-availability of clean water and illiteracy. For arresting and improving these variables, advanced countries should transfer technology and reduce debt from the underdeveloped and developing countries.

The HDR 2004 has rejected the notion that cultural differences lead to social, economic and political differences. Therefore, measures need to be taken to promote intercultural solidarity, and tolerance among different religious communities. Today mankind has a choice either to help the countries financially and technologically or be ready to see failure of HD. Cross-water conflicts should be resolved through international cooperation because millions of people are dying every year just for want of water and owing to poor hygienic conditions.

Today, the world is witnessing unprecedented climate change. Technologically advanced countries should earmark funds for cuts in greenhouse gas emissions and help less advanced countries to check such emissions. Such emissions adversely affect the ecosystems on the earth. Apart from it there is a need to give a boost to the migration as it opens new opportunities and vistas of human development. People being the real wealth of a nation, efforts should be continued to facilitate human rights, human security, empowerment and freedoms to speed up human development.

On the basis of HDRs 2011-2020 it is discernible as given below;

Expressing serious concern, the HDR 2011 has cautioned humankind to check environmental deterioration and social inequalities otherwise reversal trends in HD could ensue. Suggestion of HDR to make a healthy environment as human right appears to be a far cry. However, UNDP expressed a sense of satisfaction finding marked improvement in HD in forty developing countries and termed it as 'Rise of the South' during previous decades. However, the gap between North and South and between the countries of South needs to be bridged, the earlier the better.

Stressing on the need to provide work not just jobs to the people, the UNDP believes that through creative expression, work enhances social cohesion and solidarity. But burgeoning unemployment in demographic billionaires like India, getting jobs not to talk of work continues to be a daunting task for millions of educated youth. Addressing this issue continues to be a huge challenge. Development of collective capabilities, autonomy and inclusion could be done if developed and developing countries join hands, hearts and heads together because preservation and sustainability of the planet is a common heritage of all the people.

It is discernible from a group of limited nations led by Norway ranking very high in human development and a large number of countries lagging much behind in the tally, that advanced nations should liberally help the countries which have been doing poorly in HD. The HDR 2019 observes that inequalities push the people to the corners. For remove the roadblock of inequality, a multipronged strategy has to be formulated by concerned countries to do away with social, economic and political inequalities.

The HDR 2020 asserts that the ongoing age is the age of humans which is known to be anthropocene. In this age humans are shaping the planet which is exactly the opposite which used to happen earlier. In this process countries have undoubtedly improved their levels of HD, but the ongoing Covid-19, has threatened its reversal. This unprecedented situation being faced by all the countries located in different parts of the planet has unearthed that planetary and societal imbalances or even balances are intertwined.

Conclusion

The ongoing pandemic Covid-19, undoubtedly has adversely affected the state of human development cutting across North and South, urban and rural communities and gender. However, experience of human development particularly of the last three decades unearths that nations have remarkably improved their levels of HD. However, inequality between the people, abject poverty, less availability of opportunities to the women and less utilization of their capabilities, lesser human face of globalization, maldistribution of resources, lack of fulfillment of minimum needs like water and hygiene for large number of people and exploitation of natural resources are roadblocks in the process of HD. But allocation of more funds for social security, education and health services and provision of higher financial aid as a booster dose for HD, and a number of concrete steps by countries joining heads, hands and hearts to work for human development sustain hope that choices of the people will be enlarged, people would be able to live longer, healthier and more dignified lives. They would have higher educational accomplishments and better incomes. In view of the fact that human development concerns advancing the richness of human life and not merely with economic growth, therefore, such growth has to be managed properly otherwise it can be jobless, voiceless, ruthless, rootless and futureless and detrimental to human development.

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