DISTRICT HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT HOOGHLY

DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING DEPARTMENT GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
Foreword

For a very long time, Hooghly has been held as a district of eminence in the annals of Bengal. It has welcomed almost all the factors that have impacted West Bengal to find its place on the historical, social, cultural, political and economic map of India. Situated on the banks of one of the tributaries of the Ganga, this district takes its name from the tributary itself. A cradle of mixed European cultures - the French in Chandannagore, the Dutch in Sreerampore and Chinsurah, this district is replete with representations of the glorious heritage of Bengal. Here, agricultural progress and industrial development have not been mere successive processes of socio-economic churning, but have played a vital role to shape the destiny of Gangetic Bengal for centuries together. Being the birth-place of Sree Sree Ramakrishna and Raja Rammohan Roy and the primary working place of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Haji Mohammed Mohsin and Rev. William Carey, religious and social reforms have had a compatriotic influence on the academic and artistic arena of Hooghly that manifests in the historical structures of yesteryears, which attract the present generation equally as it had been in the past.

Blessed with natural and topographic advantages, Hooghly has been a forerunner in the field of agro-industrial development. The first automobile plant of the country came up in this district only. This event was preceded by remarkable growth in agricultural produce, which continues, followed by setting up of numerous jute-mills that catapulted this district on the top rung of the growth ladder along with Bardhaman. It is one of the few districts in the entire Eastern region of the country that portrays superiority not only in agriculture but in all the sectors - small, medium and large - of industries.
To depict the human development scenario of such a district is no mean task. In fact very few districts in the country may have such a variety of working population comprising of farmers, craftsmen, weavers, boat-makers, mill-workers and artisans in the backdrop of burgeoning urbanisation and the pressures of modernisation. The credit to document all these with their sectional variations goes to the combined efforts of the academicians, the administrators and their associates, the peoples' representatives and to the numerous silent yet untold of contributors. I thank all of them and avail this opportunity to record my appreciation to the esteemed members of the State Planning Board and the officers and staff of the Development and Planning Department, without whom this Report could not have been published. This the seventh in our series of DHDRs, following the publication of the SHDR in 2004.

It is my belief that this document will serve as a useful instrument to further the progress of Hooghly in the sphere of Human Development.

Kolkata
March, 2011

Nirupam Sen
Preface

The concept ‘human development’ is a paradigm shift in development thinking, which gained much popularity after the publication of first Human Development Report in 1990. The prime objective of the human development approach is to put people at the centre of development with their active participation in the development process. Human Development approach broadly advocates for widening up of people’s choice and the attainment of a decent standard of living. Three essential choices of life are: to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living. Other choices highly valued by many people, range from political, economic and social freedom to opportunities for being creative and productive and enjoying self-respect and guaranteed human rights (HDR, 1990). Human development index as an indicator of prosperity is measured how the planned efforts have succeeded in providing better opportunities for people specially the deprived and those who are living below the poverty line to enjoy a productive and socially meaningful life. To combat with the socio-economic deprivation of the people, Eleventh Five Year Plan document of the Government of India focuses on a new development challenge, known as inclusive development, is based on the understanding of the two concepts: inclusion and development. Inclusion is a process that aims at bringing about all the people in the developmental network; while Millennium Development Goals provide the basic framework of developmental needs of the people. The key ingredients of inclusive development paradigm are: poverty alleviation, establishment of human rights and the participation of civil society in the developmental process. The concept Human Development which focuses the socio-economic conditions of the people also propagates for inclusive development paradigm. In fact, the central to Human Development is the participation of the vulnerable sections of the society in the development process.

People's participation in the development process can be ensured through the implementations of decentralized planning. District Human Development Report attempts to capture the sub-district level variations in the socio-economic indicators of development so as to prepare the blue-print of a balanced human development strategy ensuring people’s participation at the grass root level. This report makes an in-depth analysis of the quality of life of the people of the district encompassing the components like livelihood opportunities, educational achievements, health status, gender disparities, resource vulnerability and the dimension of cultural tourism. Since independence, especially in the last three decades of development planning, there has been noticeable progress in Hooghly district especially in respect of poverty eradication, and in the fields of education, health, employment and people’s participation in development process. Nevertheless, certain areas demand active governmental actions and a participative civil society to ensure that the most vulnerable groups benefit from the development process.

Getting formal invitation for preparing District Human Development Report Hooghly from the then District Magistrate of Hooghly Mrs. Nilam Meena through our Hon’ble Vice Chancellor Professor Subrata Pal and the Registrar Dr. Shorosimohan Dan of the University of Burdwan on December 31, 2008, was a big challenge as well as a huge opportunity to the Department of Economics. We whole heartedly took the responsibility and devoted our relentless efforts in the preparation of DHDR Hooghly. We express our gratitude to Mrs Nilam Meena, former District
Magistrate, Prof. Subrata Pal, Vice-chancellor of Burdwan University, Dr. Shorosimohan Dan, Registrar and Prof. Arup Chattopadhyay, Dean, Faculty of Arts, for assigning such a high valued task to the Department of Economics, Burdwan University.

This report is an outcome of fruitful collaborative efforts. The process of preparation of this report has been an enriching experience for the core team. In the process we have received help, guidance, advice and suggestions from many quarters. We are deeply indebted to Mr. Aswini Yadav, Present District Magistrate, Hooghly, for his dynamic leadership, generous administrative supports and suggestions especially in the final stage of preparing the report. We express our sincerer gratitude to Mr. Asit Patra, Savadhipati, Hooghly Zilla Parishad, for his assistance and constant encouragement during the period of the study.

The preparation of the report followed a number of workshops and presentations both at the district and the State level. First two district level workshops were held at Hooghly involving academicians, officials of various line Departments specifically to identify the thrust areas of the study and the data gap, while the third one focused on methodological dimensions of the study. Two State level presentations were held on June 15, 2009 and November 27, 2009, at the Department of Planning, Government of West Bengal in the presence of Hon’ble Minister in Charge, Development Planning and Industries, Sri Nirupam Sen and we shared the experience of noted academicians of national and international repute, like Prof. Nripen Bandopadhyay, Prof. Asis Banerjee, Prof. P.N. Roy and Prof. Nikhilesh Bhattacharya, the Directors of various Departments of the Government of West Bengal. We take this opportunity to express our deep sense of gratitude to Sri Nirupam Sen, Hon’ble MIC, Development Planning and Industries, for showing his keen interests to explore the diverse socio-economic situations and the level of living of the people of the District. He has been a constant source of inspiration for meaningful conclusion of the report. We also express our gratitude to all the academicians and administrators who participated in the discussions on the presentations of the report. Ms. Jaya Das Gupta, Principal Secretary, played an instrumental role for organizing State level workshops and made effective suggestions for qualitative improvement of the report. We express our sincerely thanks to Ms Das Gupta. We acknowledge the dynamic role played by Mr. S. Purkait, ADM (Dev), Mr. Asraf Ali, former ADM (Gen), Mr. Saibal Chakraborty, former DPLO, Mr. Adhir Biswas, present DPLO, Dr. Subrata Sarma, Economist-cum-Credit Planner, Badal Krishna Mukhapadhyay of District Administration, Hooghly, in executing the study specially in collecting data, organizing district level workshops and making insightful comments on the first draft of the report. Natural Resource Database Management System (NRDMS) Centre, Hooghly, also played a very active role in the preparation of the report. We acknowledge the services of two young but dynamic staff Sri Sudipta Ghosh, in charge NRDMS and Ms Barnali Sinha, Centre Assistant, for their tireless efforts in the preparation of various maps relating to the report. We thankfully acknowledge the cooperation of various line departments of Hooghly district administration such as Departments of Health, Education, Agriculture, Land, Forest, Agri-irrigation, Animal husbandry, Fishery, Industry, PWD and Handloom.

We express our gratitude to all the people whom we interviewed and interacted during primary survey as well as in PEOPLESPEAK visits in different blocks/Municipalities of the district. We gratefully acknowledge the services rendered by the personnel of BAES, Hooghly Branch,
under the leadership of Asst. Director Sri Mrinal Santra, who provided trained manpower and supervised the primary data collection process. We also express our sincere thanks to all the ICDS and SHG members who took the burden of collecting primary data from various blocks and municipalities of the district.

Such a monumental task of preparing DHDR is contingent upon efficient handling of data and its appropriate analysis. The DHDR Data Entry Desk at the Department of Economics was effectively handled by Ms Moumita Chattopadhyay, Sri Madhusudan Das and Sri Amit Nandi as project Assistants and a group of young scholars of Economics specially Dr. Arindam Laha, Lecturer, Department of Commerce, Burdwan University, Ms. Runa Roy, Lecturer in Economics, Durgapur Government College, Sri Debasis Chakraborty, Sri Tirthankar Mondal, Sri Pankaj Kumar Pal, Sri Krishna Singh, Koushik Hati, Krishanu Sarkar, Tibul Hoque and Debasis Battabyal, Lecturer, DSMS, Durgapur. Without their active co-operations and relentless efforts this report would not have got its present shape. We gratefully acknowledge their contributions. Department of Economics being the nodal agency of preparing the DHDR, Hooghly, extended all types of institutional supports including computer laboratory, infrastructure of DRS project of UGC and skilled man power. We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all members of the Faculty of Economics including the office assistants Sri Sandipan Hati, Sri Prabir Sen Sharma, and Sri Harasit Sil for their self-less assistance and co-operation.

We are grateful to Prof. Jaydev Sarkhel, Department of Commerce, Prof. Kalyanbrata Bhattacharya, Rtd. Professor, Department of Economics, Prof. Arup Chattapadhyay, Department of Economics and Prof. Soumyendra Kishor Datta, Department of Economics, University of Burdwan, for extending their valuable time and labour in checking parts of the manuscripts and making effective suggestions to improve upon the report.

This is the first human development report for the District of Hooghly. The unique feature of this report is that it provides a comprehensive picture of Human Development at the sub-district level in three modes of presentation: it gives analytical explanations of identified issues of Human Development, simultaneously it attempts to identify the gaps in human development parameters at the sub-district level in terms of several indices of development and finally, this report provides a snapshot view of development of the district in terms of social development radar. We hope the analysis and findings of the report would be useful to the planners and policy makers for adopting appropriate policy actions so as to achieve a balanced and sustainable human development for Hooghly District.

Pravat Kumar Kuri,

Lead Co-ordinator

(DHDR Team, Hooghly)
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