

Human Development Reports

Today, it is widely accepted that the real purpose of development is to enlarge people's choices in all fields—economic, political and cultural.

The late
Mahbub ul Haq,
architect of the
*Human Development
Report*

A Tool for Progress

Eleven years ago, UNDP began producing an annual *Human Development Report* (HDR)—a review of country-by-country progress and global trends in the struggle for development. It was intended to be not just a snapshot, but a handbook; sharing information, opening new options and presenting new ideas for policymakers. It has redefined the terms of the development debate by broadening the focus beyond narrow income indicators to literacy, health, life expectancy and other measures of a nation's well-being.

From small villages to global capitals, the report has become an indispensable tool in sparking and shaping advocacy and awareness of human development and poverty. In the *Human Development Report 2000*, UNDP restated the importance of fighting poverty not just as a development goal, but as a central tenet of our global struggle for human rights.

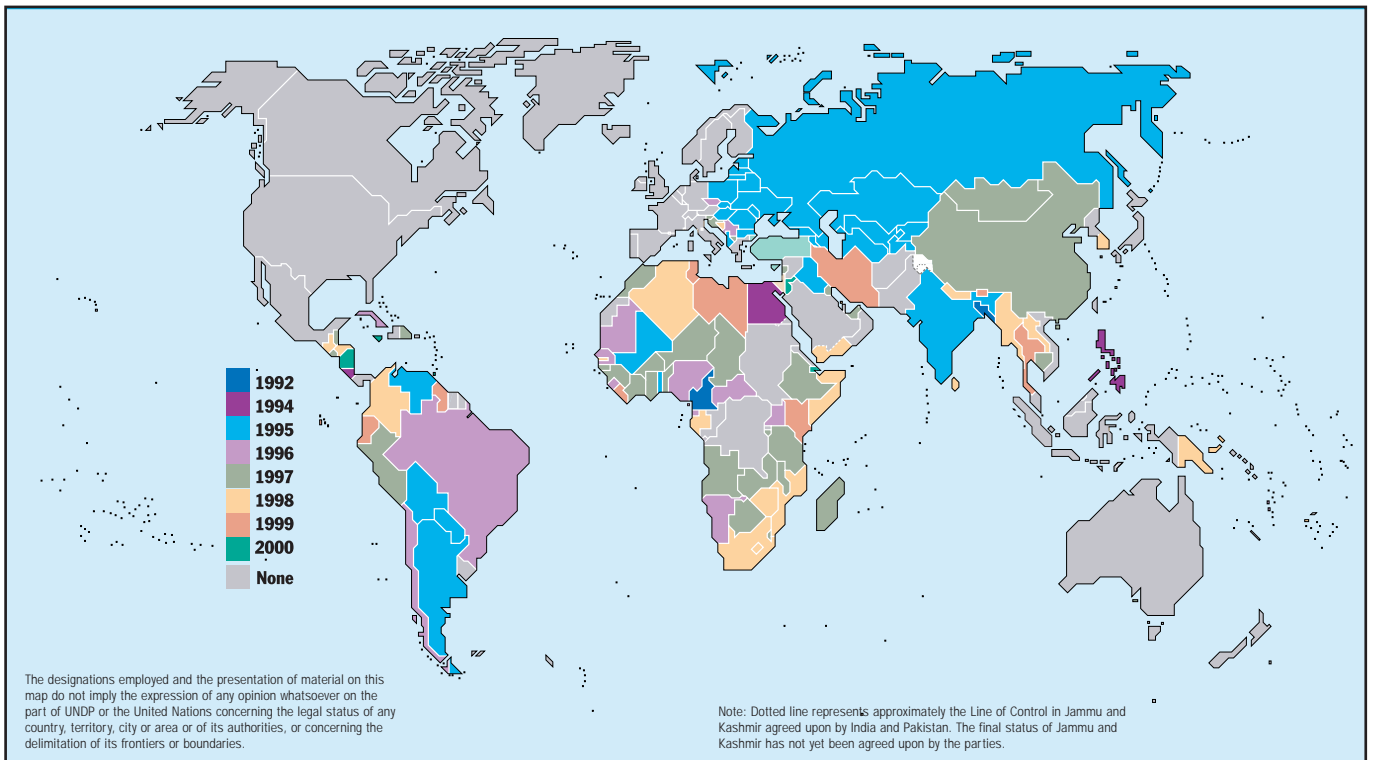
The reports' signature human development index (HDI) serves policymakers and analysts around the world as a broader alternative to gross national product for measuring national progress. UNDP has helped redefine development away from solely economic indicators, and towards a balanced concern for equity, sustainability, productivity and empowerment.

An Internet-based community of scholars and policymakers, the National Human Development Report (NHDR) network, has grown up to consider new policies and debate measurement tools.

Around the world, countries—and even states and regions—now produce *National Human Development Reports*. **South Asia** was the first region to produce its own Human Development Report. The Arab countries will produce their first regional report to be launched in December 2001. In the last decade, more than 350 reports have been produced in



Fernando Henrique Cardoso, President of Brazil, launches the Alvorada Programme specifically targeting the 14 Brazilian states with the lowest rank in the human development index.



World map depicting cumulative number of countries producing NHDRs by year since 1992. No NHDRs were produced in 1993.

134 countries, serving as locally-owned instruments for change. They are countries' own means for measuring poverty, marking progress, and making policy choices.

- ★ **Brazil's** President Fernando Henrique Cardoso targeted a \$7.4 billion anti-poverty programme at the 14 states with the lowest HDI.

- ★ **Bulgaria** has used its 2000 report to select target locations for small business promotion.

- ★ In **India**, state-level HDRs have become a fundamental part of planning and political discourse in 20 states.

- ★ **South Africa's** 2000 report sparked heated public debates about the way forward in combating poverty.

UNDP's *Human Development Report 2001* will focus on technologies and their challenges and opportunities for development. It directly addresses controversial policy issues such as the benefits and risks of genetically-modified

foods; intellectual property regimes; promoting development of vaccines for diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis; and responding to the brain drain created by the emigration of highly-educated workers. This year, the report introduces a technology achievement index, which focuses on how well a country as a whole is participating in creating and using technology.

In all these ways, the report will showcase new options for developing countries, and use UNDP expertise to help make those options into new and better realities.

For more information: www.undp.org/hdro. ■