



From Development to Human Development

Tool for Applying the Human Development Perspective



Human Development Report Unit
UNDP Regional Centre for Asia Pacific, Colombo Office

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This updated 2009 version, developed at the Human Development Report Unit based on discussions within the HDRU Team, responds to further questions and queries from UNDP country offices. The HDRU team members who contributed to this revised publication are Elena Borsatti, Ramesh Gampat, Rohini Kohli, Pradeepa Malkanthi, Anuradha Rajivan and Manoja Wickramaratne.



Introduction

There is a fundamental difference between analysing a development issue as a theme versus examining it from a **human development** perspective. This tool helps with the latter. Adopting a human development perspective involves recognition of development as a process beyond economic concerns and beyond a particular sector, to one that respects the choices and freedoms of human beings and seeks to enlarge capabilities and opportunities for all. The human development perspective is fully consistent with the human rights approach – acceptance of the universality of human rights (rather than particular rights for selected persons) is the backbone for arguing for a people centered approach.

This tool aims to develop skills to apply a human development lens to issues. It is a first step in operationalising the human development approach in shaping policies and programmes. The human development approach keeps people at the centre (rather than, for example, GDP per capita) and their quality of life as the ultimate aim.

We take a couple of themes as illustrations and demonstrate how a human development lens could be applied.

“Employment” through a human development lens

Consider the theme of **Employment**. Employment can be studied as a pure employment sector issue - jobs, wages, structural unemployment, underemployment, hidden unemployment, etc. This sectoral approach misses out on many other aspects and repercussions of the employment sector, its effects on human beings in other ways. Consequently the indicators identified to assess employment conditions are also limited.

Examining the sector from a human development lens means studying the critical questions relating to the lives of human beings. It does not mean ignoring incomes or the importance of material conditions, but going beyond them. Specifically, the questions that follow suggest how the theme can be analysed from a human development angle:

- How sustainable are emerging job opportunities? What are the possible trade offs between employment now and future livelihoods?
- How sustainable are employment-oriented policies and programmes in terms of fiscal implications?
- What are the environmental sustainability implications?
- What is the quality of working conditions in paid work?
- What are the links between employment/unemployment on one hand and health and nutrition security on the other? Do the effects vary between adult workers and child workers?
- Do the nature of employment and conditions of employment influence health? Are differences along gender lines significant?
- How does employment status influence the ability to access to knowledge? Do the effects vary between adult workers and child workers? What about female workers?
- How are employment conditions linked to efficiency and incomes? Are there

differences between short and longer term effects (e.g. investing in education and training could postpone incomes but allow higher incomes at a later date)?

- Does employment reduce poverty, if so, how? Are the effects the same for all sections of the population (e.g., children)?
- What are the implications of changing employment patterns on inequality?
- How are wages relevant in assessing links between employment and poverty?
- Do the linkages between employment and poverty have different implications for women and men?
- Does one's employment situation influence how empowered he/she gets or feels? The difference in the voice of an employed and an unemployed person in the society and whether the concerns of the latter are heard as well.
- Does employment influence social status and dignity and if so, in what ways? Are there differences within and outside the family? What are the similarities and differences that men and women face?
- What are the key issues in youth employment and their wider implications for the societies?
- How does employment influence participation in community, political and cultural life?
- Is there a reverse linkage, i.e., do better or worse human development conditions

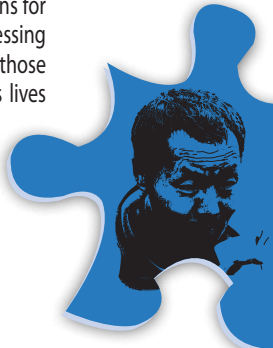
influence employment status, earnings, quality and predictability of work?

Applying the human development lens to "trade"

No country in the world can isolate itself from buying and selling across borders. But too often discussions tend to focus on commercial aspects and the economic implications. The location of trade policies in ministries of commerce or economy indicates the dominant perception regarding how trade related issues are seen in national policies.

Yet, trade is not just about exporting and importing and having the foreign exchange to do so. Goods, services, people and ideas cross national borders, resulting in an enormous widening of opportunities for some, as well as restricted choices and worsening conditions for others. Applying the human development lens for policies and programmes would imply addressing questions that go beyond the economic to those that reflect concerns for improving people's lives and widening their choices. Questions of interest for human development are:

- What are the implications for people's livelihoods and future generations if trade in natural resources is accelerated for the current profits of commercial entities? How can trade offs between food security at the national level versus farm livelihoods be addressed?
- How are female



employment opportunities being influenced with increased integration of production processes and geographic dispersion, say, in trade in the ready-made garments sector?

- Are women from disadvantaged sections of the population getting more opportunities through trade in services (house maids, entertainers, nurses); what are the negative implications for their lives, health, bodily integrity, safety that policies need to address?
- Is outsourcing of business processes contributing to efficiencies for both buyers and sellers? What are the negative effects on health, educational choices?
- Does travel across national boundaries contribute to educational experiences, access to new ideas and opportunities, empowerment? What are the negative human consequences like implications for families, unsafe money transfer and physical safety?
- What can poor countries do if they are denied access to lifesaving drugs because of intellectual property regimes as non-trade barriers come into centre-stage of international trade debates?
- Can poor countries participate better in global trade by leveraging and add value to traditional knowledge through tools like establishing geographical indications

for products that go beyond wines, spirits and cheeses? For example, neem or phukok sauce? Or diversify their exports by strengthening travel and tourism?

Such questions can be posed around some of the key dimensions of human development.¹ For example the five human development dimensions of interest are:

Are the benefits *sustainable*? From the viewpoint of their environmental implications, to what extent, for example, does trade increase the pressure for marketization of agriculture and fisheries? Could this lead to intensive cultivation and mono-cropping? To what extent can the benefits be sustained over time, in view of, for example, technological change, dynamic comparative advantages or intergenerational considerations?

Are the benefits *equitable*? Do some have more opportunities than others? Which groups benefit more than others? Are there losers, and if so, are they the relatively worse off? Does trade contribute to reducing or widening of inequalities? How do Least Developed Countries and those that face trade-related vulnerabilities fare? When people and countries at different starting points engage in trade, do the better-off benefit more? Do policies and institutions have to be 'unequal' to promote equity, for example, through special and differential treatment provisions?

Are the implications *empowering*? Does the 'agency' of some groups get compromised or enhanced? Can people lead more dignified and empowered lives, say, through better or new

¹ A similar conceptualization may be seen in Waglé and Gibbs (2003), later incorporated in Montes and Memis (2005). The idea originates from Mahbub Ul-Haq (1995) and has been used in the Asia-Pacific Human Development Report, *Trade on Human Terms* (UNDP 2006).

employment opportunities, for example, through the offshoring of business processes? To what extent does more open trade destroy jobs, say, for farmers or garment workers of Asia? Are the new ideas and experiences empowering?

Are there *efficiency* effects? Does the exchange of goods, services, money and ideas contribute to productivity improvements? Does this happen more in the already more profitable sectors, as against in sectors that employ lower-end workers? Does more income in people's hands lead to better health, with less absenteeism, less down-time? Do people invest more in education as they see its benefits? Are educational choices influenced by market?

How can trade become more inclusive, so there is wider *participation* of people in its benefits? Trade that excludes people who have little to sell, or created enclaves of prosperity in a largely deprived population will be hard to sustain and may contain seeds of disaffection and conflict.

Sustainability – Equity – Empowerment – Efficiency – Participation: Does human development 'SEEEP' to the bottom?

There are also tradeoffs, between productivity, for example, and equity. While these dimensions do not encompass all of human development, they serve as a useful tool to assess international trade on human terms.

Other themes

A similar exercise can be undertaken for other issues like the complex issue of **corruption**. Corruption can be studied, both, as thematic issue,

and in contrast, as a human development issue by applying the human development lens² to identify human causes, consequences that affect people's lives and human development oriented solutions through policies and programmes. Corruption is not limited to politicians or officials taking bribes in return for favours, for doing or even refraining from doing legitimate duties. Even seemingly petty forms of corruption can hide deep institutional weaknesses that disempower disadvantaged people, widen inequalities, undermine sustainability of institutions, and lower productivity – undermine genuine choices for people's daily lives.

Similarly, **HIV/AIDS** is not just a health issue, but is one that has much wider implications in terms of human development. In exploring HIV/AIDS from a human development perspective, issues such as equity, women's rights, stigma and discrimination, livelihoods, productivity and employment implications, empowerment of the affected population, going beyond those infected (care givers, family members, children) as well as health need to be considered.

The human development perspective also can be applied to specific groups to assess and overcome horizontal inequalities such as **males and females**, **indigenous peoples** or other **socially excluded groups**. When looking at development indicators for the groups it is useful to disaggregate data to examine what the sustainability, equity, efficiency, empowerment and participation implications will be.

² UNDP 2008.



Using the Millennium Development Goals as a framework for the analysis can also help. For example, it is possible to assess the development issue by asking how and to what extent are the goals, targets and indicators affected? Are there reverse linkages, i.e., do better human development conditions influence? These are useful questions to answer in order to get a 'more human development oriented perspective' on the development problem.

The table below facilitates such an exploration. It is an indicative guidance tool to help root analysis in human development, systematically leading us towards accurate DIAGNOSIS, looking for EVIDENCE and following up with appropriate SOLUTIONS to address particular challenges. It helps keep the focus on the disadvantaged, expand capabilities and choices and leads us to doing something about it. The table can be modified by customising for the particular theme under consideration, incorporating local specificities and priorities.

APPLYING THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT LENS Towards Operationalising the Human Development Perspective S-E-E-E-P				
	HD Dimension: <i>Sustainability, Equity, Efficiency, Empowerment and Participation</i>	Diagnosis: <i>Assess Causes and Consequences</i> (positive and negative)	Evidence: <i>Map and Measure</i> (possible indicators and data, examples, case studies)	Solutions: <i>Policies, Programmes, Laws, Agreements etc.</i> (sub-national/national/regional/global levels, as applicable)
1	SUSTAINABILITY - Environmental			
	SUSTAINABILITY - Intergenerational			
	SUSTAINABILITY - Fiscal sustainability - Possibility of ongoing opportunities, effects			
2	EQUITY - Gender Inequality (Largest horizontal inequality) - Capabilities (health and nutrition security, knowledge, incomes) - Opportunities (political voice and decision making, economic assets, legal rights) - Access to justice			
	EQUITY - Social Exclusion (Other excluded groups like indigenous people, HIV affected, displaced, remote located – horizontal inequalities) - Capabilities (health and nutrition security, knowledge, incomes) - Opportunities (political voice and decision making, economic assets, legal rights) - Implications for social tensions and insecurity			
	EQUITY - Vertical Inequalities - Economic inequalities			

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APPLYING THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT LENS Towards Operationalising the Human Development Perspective S-E-E-E-P				
	HD Dimension: <i>Sustainability, Equity, Efficiency, Empowerment and Participation</i>	Diagnosis: <i>Assess Causes and Consequences</i> (positive and negative)	Evidence: <i>Map and Measure</i> (possible indicators and data, examples, case studies)	Solutions: <i>Policies, Programmes, Laws, Agreements etc.</i> (sub-national/national/regional/global levels, as applicable)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poverty reduction - Access to knowledge - Health - Implications for social tension and insecurity 			
3	EFFICIENCY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implications for productivity, GDP growth - Per capita incomes 			
	EFFICIENCY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building capabilities 			
	EFFICIENCY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fuller use of resources - More complete solutions 			
4	EMPOWERMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human rights for all, not just for selected categories - Social freedoms and choices - Implications for social tensions and insecurity 			
	EMPOWERMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political voice and decision making, backed by law and in fact - Implications for social tensions and insecurity 			
	EMPOWERMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic power - Control over assets with legal backing - Ownership and control of businesses 			

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APPLYING THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT LENS Towards Operationalising the Human Development Perspective S-E-E-E-P				
	HD Dimension: <i>Sustainability, Equity, Efficiency, Empowerment and Participation</i>	Diagnosis: <i>Assess Causes and Consequences</i> (positive and negative)	Evidence: <i>Map and Measure</i> (possible indicators and data, examples, case studies)	Solutions: <i>Policies, Programmes, Laws, Agreements etc.</i> (sub-national/national/regional/global levels, as applicable)
	-Independent bank accounts, access to finance - Implications for social tensions and insecurity			
5	PARTICIPATION - Economic exclusion (from livelihoods and paid work, trade, assets, poverty based exclusion) - Exclusion through geography - Exclusion based on social factors, stigma and discrimination			
	PARTICIPATION - Political exclusion in institutions of formal decision making (parliaments, sub-national political bodies) - Exclusion through geography - Exclusion based on social stigma and discrimination - Exclusion shaped by attitudes, history, tradition			
	PARTICIPATION - Lack of access to education, health, mobility			
	ANY OTHER			

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