

International Webinar on

Human Development Index at 30: African and South Asian Perspectives

Dates: September 24 & 25, 2021

Jointly Organized by

**Centre for Gandhian Studies, Central University of Kerala, Kasaragod,
Kerala (India)**

&

Centre for Rural Management (CRM), Kottayam, Kerala (India)

Concept Note

The concept and construction of Human Development Index developed by Mahbubul Haq and Amartya Sen was a landmark in critical intellectual engagement with human progress. It is based on the concept of capabilities or what people can do and what they can become. The human development index (HDI) until recently was a measure of progress in three basic indices or capabilities, namely a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living. Since its launch in 1990, it has been used by political regimes to measure human progress at the local, regional, and national levels. There have been continuous efforts for upgradation and refinement of the HDI in the context of the political economy of different countries. Other capabilities that came to be highlighted include participation in the decisions affecting one's life, freedom from violence, recognition and adequate leisure. Many countries have mainstreamed the HDI into their official statistics. When it is brought out every year, it elicits serious discussion among political and bureaucratic circles, and spurs efforts on the part of countries to register improvements in HDI.

The 30th anniversary edition of the Human Development Report, *The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene* introduces a new component, a country's carbon dioxide emissions and its material footprint. It suggests that we combine the wellbeing of people and the planet to produce a measure instead of being narrowly human centred. It speaks about the continuum of human and nonhuman life forms. The extent to

which we become climate neutral is crucial. Many countries that score high on the HDI also contribute most, in per capita terms, to climate change.

Most countries in sub-Saharan Africa are still way down on HDI according to the conventional HDI. Conflict in countries like DR Congo makes progress in HDI almost an insurmountable problem. However, countries like Sri Lanka, which went through three decades of conflict, did not collapse on the human development front. Although most countries in the African continent did not meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) targets, progress made in this line has laid the foundation for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Regional progress toward achieving the MDGs may also have contributed to human development and also reduce the disease burden of the continent arising from AIDS, TB and Malaria.

Although India has slipped down by two points in the recent report, when the climate element is brought in, it is likely to move further up the ladder. While Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, two sub national regions from India have made considerable progress in HDI, Bihar and UP (India) still lag behind. In India, we have been bringing out sub-national human development reports and indices during the last 30 years with states like Madhya Pradesh, being the first state in the world to translate HDI to the sub-national level. Karnataka, another state in India, is the first in the world to prepare reports for all the districts under a common methodological framework and within a common time frame. The state of Gujarat in India has followed suit with 33 district level reports. Then there are local governments that had constructed the HDI, as in the case of the Mumbai Corporation and Idukki District Panchayat from Kerala. Of course, there may be similar narratives from other parts of South Asia and Africa. It is time we reflect on where we stand and what more needs to be done. How the Human Development Reports and Indices can be used as means to further decentralization and strengthening of the local governments is also an area where studies need to be undertaken. The impact of the reports on governance, planning and policy making also has to be discussed in the context of the 30th anniversary of the Human Development Report. The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic has not been reckoned in the 2020 UNDP report since it covered only 2019 and when it is also factored in, the move to achieve the sustainable development goals by 2030 is likely to face several hurdles.

It is opportune to estimate the report's current and future implications for Africa and South Asia. The present generation, being the first in the era of the Anthropocene, has added responsibility to look at the report, particularly in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic that has ravaged the

earth. Papers on any of the following or related themes are invited for the webinar scheduled on the 24 & 25 September 2021.

Indicative Themes (you are also free to choose other related themes)

- Human Development Report and Index: Philosophy, History, Changing Focus and Critics
- Human Development Report and Index: Beyond Haq and Sen
- Human Development Index: Through the Lens of Gandhi, Ujama and Ubuntu
- Progress in Human Development in Sub Saharan Africa
- Conflict and Human Development Indices
- Human Development and MDGs/SDGs
- Efforts to Prepare National HDIs in Africa
- Efforts to Prepare Regional and Sub-Regional (District) HDIs in Africa
- HDI and India- National, Sub-national and District Level Reports
- HDI in North Eastern States in India
- HDI and Local Governments
- Outliers in HDI: The Case of Kerala and Similar Regions
- Gender Development Index (GDI) and Mainstreaming Gender in Governance
- HDI and the Sri Lankan Miracle in South Asia
- HDI in South Asian Countries
- Bhutan in the New HDI
- HDI and its Impact on Governance, Planning and Policy Making

Deadlines

Size of the Abstract (250 Words)

Submission of Abstract : 30 July, 2021

Full Paper (3000 to 6000 Words) : 20 August, 2021

Webinar Date : 24 & 25 September, 2021

(MS word APA Style of Referencing is preferable)

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