

Human Development Report

Why in news?

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2016 Human Development Report has been released released by the UNDP

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What are the facts?

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- The HDI is a measure for assessing **progress in three basic dimensions** of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and access to a decent standard of living.

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- The world's top three countries in HDI are Norway, Australia and Switzerland.

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- India slipped down one place to 131st place from 130 among the 188 countries ranked in terms of human development.

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- India's HDI value of 0.624 puts it in the "medium human development" category, alongside countries such as Congo, Namibia and Pakistan.

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- It is ranked **third among the SAARC countries**, behind Sri Lanka (73) and the Maldives (105), both of which figure in the "high human development" category.

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- The largest gender disparity in development was in South Asia, where the female HDI value is 20% lower than the male value.

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- The report says 54% of people who live in multidimensional poverty are concentrated in South Asia.

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- While India's HDI value increased from 0.428 in 1990 to 0.624 in 2015, it still had the lowest rank among BRIC nations.

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- The percentage of women in the workforce is the lowest in India among the BRICS countries.
- India's public health expenditure (1.4% of GDP) was even lower than South Asian average spending (1.6% of GDP).

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What were the postivies mentioned?

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- In India, between 1990 and 2015, life expectancy has improved by 10.4 years.
- Child malnutrition declined by 10% points from 2015.
- There were some modest gain in infant and under-five mortality rates.
- The report **praised India's reservation policy**, saying even though it has not remedied caste-based exclusions, it has had substantial positive effects.
- It also hailed the MGNREGA, Right to Information, National Food Security, and Right to Education Acts.
- It commended the Indian grassroots group **Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sanghatan** for popularising social audits of government schemes.

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What needs to be done?

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- After 1990, the rise in incomes that came with a more open economy has not translated into a higher quality of life for many Indians.
- Significant inequalities persist, particularly between States and regions, which act as major barriers to improvement.
- A central focus on social indicators is necessary for India to break free from its position as an underachiever.

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- More should be done to **eliminate subsidies** for the richest quintile.

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- The rise in revenues should go towards making public education of high standards accessible to all and delivering on the promised higher budgetary outlay for health care.

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- One crucial metric that gets insufficient attention in the measurement of development is **the state of democracy**, reflected among other things in access to justice.

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- It is relevant to point out that India has not ratified UN conventions on torture, rights of migrant workers and their families, and protection against enforced disappearance.

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- Sustaining and improving the quality of life will **depend on policies** crafted to handle major emerging challenges such as urbanisation, the housing deficit, access to power, water, education and health care.

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Source: The Hindu

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