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Human Development: Beyond the HDI

UNDP's HDI and HPI measures include only a few basic aspects of human development.

This article reports on a study that identified many more relevant indicators.

Correlation analysis found 31 indicators with different trends from each other and also from HDI.

Income per capita proved a poor indicator of human development.

Assessing human development fully requires a broad set of indicators.

Human Development (HD) has been defined as 'a process of enlarging people's choices'. Although HD is often equated with the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) in popular discourse, it has long been recognized that this is an incomplete measure of HD, leaving out many important aspects of life; it encompasses only three rather basic elements of human wellbeing. Our aim is to identify a broader set of dimensions of wellbeing constituting HD and indicators to measure them. We then explore whether the HDI in fact is a good measure of the broader dimensions or whether additional indicators are needed.

Defining what makes for a fulfilled life has been a central theme of philosophers and politicians throughout history. Aristotle's *Ethics*, for example, was devoted to identifying the conditions needed to achieve *eudaimonia*, commonly interpreted as 'the best life'.

Our first task is to identify which aspects of life might reasonably qualify as part of a broader conception of HD. Many attempts have been made to identify what makes for a flourishing life. Here we will consider six lists, each of which adopts a different philosophical approach and justification (see page 13).

The lists are not in total agreement; some emphasize certain aspects more than others for example regarding material and non-material aspects such as friendship and emotions, and environmental issues.

Surveying these attempts to define the full life, we find that they are in broad agreement about the main dimensions to be included. In the light of this, we drew up a list of the categories of life that are candidates to be included as part of an enlarged conception of HD (see box below).

Any list of categories is inevitably both subjective and ethnocentric. Hence, anyone finding this type of approach helpful should be able to amend the categorization to reflect different views. This applies especially across different cultures.

Unlike some of the reviewed literature listings of human flourishing, our list does not include spiritual well-being, due to problems of definition and measurement. We separated social relations, which concerns individuals having satisfactory relations with others, from community wellbeing, which concerns the community as a whole and includes such elements as low crime rates and a thriving civil society. We also separated empowerment from

Enlarged conception of HD

1. The HDI itself, which includes health, education and a measure of income
2. Mental wellbeing – an individual's psychological state
3. Empowerment
4. Political freedom
5. Social relations
6. Community well-being
7. Inequalities
8. Work conditions
9. Leisure conditions
10. Political security – freedom from political violence or instability
11. Economic security – freedom from economic fluctuations
12. Environmental conditions

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Requirements for human flourishing						
Authors	Rawls (1972)	Finnis, Grisez, and Boyle (1987)	Doyal and Gough (1993)	Nussbaum (2000)	Narayan -Parker (2000)	Camfield (2005)
Defining concepts	Primary goods	Basic human values	Basic needs and Intermediate needs	Central human functional capabilities	Dimensions of wellbeing	Quality of life
Bodily wellbeing		Bodily life – health, vigour and safety	Physical health -Nutrition: food and water -Health care -Safe birth control and child bearing -Safe Physical environment	Life Bodily health Bodily integrity	Bodily well-being Access to health services Good physical environment	
Material wellbeing	Income and wealth		Protective housing Economic security		Material well-being Food Assets	Food Shelter
Mental development		Knowledge Practical reasonableness	Basic education	Senses, Imagination, Thought Emotions Practical reason Play		Education (Bangladesh and Ethiopia, vs. Thailand and Peru)
Work	Freedom of occupation	Skillful performance in work and play	Work		Work	
Security			Physical security		Civil peace Physically safe environment Lawfulness (access to justice) Personal physical security Security in old age	
Social relations	Social bases of self-respect	Friendship	Significant primary relationships	Affiliation Social bases for self-respect	Social well-being -Family -Self-respect and dignity -Community relations	Family
Spiritual wellbeing		Self-integration Harmony with ultimate source of reality				Religion (important in Bangladesh and Thailand)
Empowerment and political Freedom	Rights, liberties, opportunities Powers & prerogatives of office & positions of responsibility Freedom of movement		Autonomy of agency Civil and political rights Political participation	Control over one's environment	Freedom of choice and action	
Respect for other species				Other species		

political freedom, as the former focuses on the lack of power of particular groups, while the latter relates to liberal political conditions more generally. We included inequalities as a general category, because they affect wellbeing independently, especially that of the poor.

We then identified indicators of performance in each of the categories from international data sets. Analysing correlations among the indicators within each category across countries, and discarding those that are highly correlated with others in the same category, left 39 indicators to encompass the eleven non-HDI categories. Of these, eight indicators are highly correlated with the HDI and may therefore be represented by it. But 31 are not highly correlated, suggesting that a full assessment of human development

requires a much broader set of indicators than the HDI alone. We found that under-five mortality rates do as well as HDI, but PPP income per capita is less representative of other dimensions of human development. The HDI (and the other two broad indicators) are shown to be worse indicators of the extended conception of human development for OECD countries than for developing countries.

Our research thus explores empirical correlations, but does not attempt to investigate causality. We recognize that our procedures are somewhat arbitrary and a change in the dimensions used, the thresholds adopted, etc., would yield somewhat different results. Our basic purpose, however, is not to be definitive but to show that extending the concept and measurement of Human Development

to a broader set of dimensions seriously affects the way one should measure and assess country performance.

In future work in this area, we intend to identify typologies of developing countries/regions according to their success or failure over time with respect to the different dimensions of HD and relate this to potential policy choices. To the extent that data are available, we would also like to trace the historical progress of the current OECD countries in the various categories, which may help in drawing conclusions about transitions over time.

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