

PREFACE

The traditional theme in development economics has been to equate development with growth in per capita income. A very different perspective on development is provided by the UNDP's Human Development Report (HDR). The main idea of the UNDP's perspective is that while growth in income is an important objective, development must encompass improvements in other non-income indicators as well. This is because human well being cannot be equated with growth in income and wealth alone. In particular, the HDR advocates the use of the Human Development Index (HDI) as a more comprehensive measure of socio-economic development of a country. The HDI is a Composite of three basic components of human development; longevity, measured by life expectancy; knowledge, measured by a combination of literacy & mean year of schooling and standard of living, measured by income. The basic health and education are treated as ends of development policies.

In this study we describe the development experience of India, its States and the districts of West Bengal during the last two decades from this perspective, following the HDR methodology and suggestions. The primary purposes of this study are to construct the HDI of 16 major States of India and the districts of West Bengal for 1981 and 1991 and to compare the level of human development within the States at a particular time and also over time. We also introduce two new indicators of development as suggested by different HDRs and also by different scholars. The achievement indices and improvement indices for different indicators are also constructed at the State level.

The study is divided into six chapters. The first chapter deals with the different indicators of development and a review of literature on different issues. The second chapter is concerned with the origin and development of the UNDP's Human Development Index, its conceptual background, different modifications and the methodologies used by the UNDP. In chapter three we express our research questions, methodology and data sources of the present study. The fourth chapter analyses the different indicators of development and the structure of the States of India & districts of West Bengal on the basis of these indicators. In chapter five the results and trends of the disaggregated HDI for the States of India and districts of West Bengal are presented. The sixth chapter deals with some concluding observations about the relationship between growth and social indicators from Indian point of view.

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Sabyasachi Roy

(Sabyasachi Roy)

Dinhata College
Cooch Behar
West Bengal

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