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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A SEARCH FOR INTEGRATED PATH OF DEVELOPMENT

A. D. Naik¹ and S. T. Bagalkoti²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Studies in Economics, Karnatak University, Dharwad.

²Professor, Department of Studies in Economics, Karnatak University, Dharwad.

Abstract:Two different but complementary paradigms of development, namely human development and sustainable development, have profoundly influenced the development policy in the last three decades. Both the paradigms of development have been accepted globally through international efforts. However, there is absence of an integrated approach of the two development paradigms. This paper describes the evolution of the concept of human development and sustainable development with emphasis on its two way linkages. It explores ways to make human development more sustainable.

Keywords: Human Development , sustainable development,

INTRODUCTION

Due to seep rise in human population and environmental degradation, there is discordance between human needs and ecological supply. This gap may create widespread havoc for sustenance of present human wellbeing. At the policy level, over the last few decades, development thinking has been profoundly changed by two different, albeit complimentary, issues that emerged in international literature: the concepts of human development and sustainable development (Constantini and Monni, 2008). This has enforced the policy makers to rethink about traditional growth strategies. The concepts of human development and sustainable development have been internalised in various national and international policy and legal instruments.

Human Development and Sustainable Development

Sen's Capabilities approach of development made economic sense and accorded prime importance for basic human needs such as education, health care, food, shelter, water, fuel, etc. Human development recognises people as the wealth of a nation. The Human Development Index (HDI), developed by M. Haq, A. K. Sen and others, and popularized by the UNDP, is an alternate to conventional measures of economic development and human well-being. The Human Development Indicator (HDI) is an indicator of the degree of human development enjoyed. It comprises of longevity (life expectancy at birth), knowledge (adult literacy rate and gross enrolment ratio) and decent standard of living (GDP per capita measured in PPP\$).

The concept of 'sustainable development' gained prominence with the 1987 publication of 'Our Common Future', the report of the UN World Commission on Environment and Development (also known as Brundtland Commission) in 1987. The classic definition of sustainable development, 'meeting the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs' was given by the Brundtland report. While this definition is commonly cited, there are divergent views on its interpretation. Following WCED definition, Dasgupta (2007) views sustainable development as "sustained social well-being, and that well-being means not just current well-being, but well-being across generations". Hence, sustainable development by definition covers an array of social, economic and environmental dimensions, across generations. Most models of sustainable development conceive of social, environmental and economic issues. It also admits the possibility of conflicts and trade-offs among social, environmental and economic issues.

Interlinking Human Development and Environment

Providing opportunities and choices for all has been the central goal of human development. Many of the government's strategies for promoting human development assumes that environment is stable in future. In reality, the state of environment is constantly changing. History, palaeoecology, archaeology and numerous other disciplines warn clearly that the environment is often unstable and subject to change (Barrow, 2003). Thus, across spatial and temporal dimensions, environment acts as a limiting factor that determine the quality of life. In this context, promoting human development requires addressing sustainability – locally, nationally and globally.

Environmental deprivations include indoor and outdoor air pollution, lack of sanitation and drainage, no access to clean water, etc. These are the basic human needs that are closely interlinked with environmental conditions of a region. Environmental degradation stunts people's capabilities and constrict people's choices in many ways, going beyond incomes and livelihoods. Failure to protect environment can become an obstacle in sustaining the progress in human development achieved in the past. The poorest people are the most hard hit because of any environmental consequences. For instance, the loss of common property resources deprive many poor people of important components of their normal livelihoods and disaster avoidance strategies.

Further, understanding of nexus between environment and human development is very essential for enhancing human development status and safeguarding environment. A growing number of researchers (Dasgupta, 2007; Sachs, 2012; Duraipappah et al, 2012) have addressed these issues. Measures such as GDP/ per capita GDP, neither recognises human capabilities nor environmental status of a region. These limitations of GDP further has the potential danger of disregarding the proper functioning of socio – economic and environmental systems. These measures should be developed on evidence base and robust set of indicators. Measurement of development path not just gauges it, but also helps in implementation of development policies. Hence measurement plays an important role in setting targets and monitoring progress. A quantitatively measured index integrating the indicators of human development and sustainable development is the. In governance context, indicator development also gives prominence to accountability of environmental and socio-economic policies. Hence, generation of integrated indicators have an important role in holistic policy making. Hence there is a need of developing integrated indicator system at local, national and global levels.

Sustainable Human Development through SDGs

However, sustainable development paradigm was not able to influence the mainstream development policies as like human development paradigm has influenced development policies all over the world. This lacuna also stepped up the efforts to streamline sustainable development policies in line with human development policies. Making development more sustainable recognises that there are many ways in which societies balance the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Since, both human capabilities and healthy environment are prerequisites of well-being of humankind in future, there is an immediate requirement of observing the link between human welfare and environment. Sustainable human development, hence aim towards creating capable, just and equitable society for present and future generations. Any form of environmental degradation could weaken the international effort to meet these objectives.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was a historic step in attainment of a set of important social goals worldwide. These set of goals encompassed concerns about poverty, hunger, disease, unmet schooling, gender inequality and environmental degradation. Being a centre of focus for policy debates, these prioritised, measurable and timebound objectives played a vital role in creating public awareness, accountability and development of better measures. Although, during the last 15 years, achievements of MDGs vary across goals and countries, there is a definite agreement among policymakers that there has been a significant progress towards the goals. However, by 2015, which is the deadline year for attainment of MDGs, there is a agreement among policy makers that this effort should be continued beyond 2015. Also there is a consensus that the earlier goals should be integrated with sustainable development objectives. In this direction, Rio+20 summit in June, 2012 recommended that the world must take on a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda in the has outlined a vision for a new development agenda that is “people centered and planet sensitive”. The implication is that a new framework will incentivize an end to extreme poverty, provide a road map to a better life for all people and ensure sustained human progress that takes place within planetary boundaries (Melamed, 2013). This approach stresses on the need of providing access to basic human needs without environmental consequences. Learning lessons from the success and failure of achieving MDGs in the past 15 years, SDGs offer a sustainable development path to enhance human wellbeing. With a shared focus on enhancing human capabilities and environmental considerations, SDGs are expected to deliver socio-economic outcomes that are compatible with the environmental considerations.

Conclusion

Sustainable Human Development is the expansion of the substantive freedoms of people today while making reasonable efforts to avoid seriously compromising those of future generations. Sustainable human development with the framework of SDGs is the approach through which societies can implement win – win solutions that favour sustainability and human development. Of late recognition of harmony between capabilities and sustainable development objectives at global level, official assistance are expected to flow towards meeting these ends. Hence, the future pathways of development with twin objectives of human wellbeing and environmental management, SDGs offer an optimistic transformative vision for humankind.

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A. D. Naik

Research Scholar, Department of Studies in Economics, Karnatak University, Dharwad

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Golden Research Thoughts
258/34 Raviwar Peth Solapur-413005, Maharashtra
Contact-9595359435
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