

# Human development and South East Asian countries: Special emphasis on India

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## ABSTRACT

'Development' is to improve the quality of people's lives by creating an environment for them to engage in a wide range of activities, to be healthy and well nourished, to be knowledgeable and to be able to participate in the community life. The Human Development Index (HDI) is a multi-dimensional index of development as it is the combination of three development indices- health index, education index and income index. This article attempts to compare the HDI and its components between various South East Asian countries. Secondary data is used. India's position on the HDI scale is equivalent to the South East Asian average and rank 134 out of more than 190 countries. In South East Asia, India stood fifth in HDI, behind Sri Lanka, Thailand, Maldives and Indonesia. Country has launched several schemes and programs to improve the health indicators, to provide elementary education to every child and to alleviate poverty. India's HDI value has improved with time but still country has a long way to go in achieving an acceptable HDI. Need is to strengthen the existing schemes and programs.

**Key words:** Education index, health index, human development, human development index, income index

## INTRODUCTION

Human development is the process of enlarging people's choices, creating an enabling environment for people to live a long and healthy life, to be educated and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living.<sup>[1]</sup> Human development can be viewed as a process of achieving an optimum level of health and well being. It includes physical, biological, mental, emotional, social, educational, economic and cultural components.<sup>[2]</sup> Human development outcomes

are a function of economic growth, social policy and poverty reduction measures at the macro level.

The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite statistic used to rank countries by level of "human development", taken as a synonym of the older term standards of living or quality of life, and distinguish "very high human development", "high human development", "medium human development", and "low human development" countries.<sup>[3]</sup> It measures the average achievements in a country in three basic dimensions of human development: A long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. The HDI is the geometric mean of normalized indices measuring achievements in each dimension depicted in Figure 1.<sup>[4]</sup>

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## Health index

Health index is constructed using life expectancy at birth, which is indicative of a long and healthy life.

- Life expectancy at birth: Number of years a newborn infant could expect to live if prevailing patterns of age-specific mortality rates at the time of birth stay the same throughout the infant's life.<sup>[4]</sup>

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### Education index

Education index is constructed using adjusting mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling

- Mean years of schooling: Average number of years of education received by people ages 25 years and older, converted from education attainment levels using official durations of each level.<sup>[4]</sup>
- Expected years of schooling: Number of years of schooling that a child of school entrance age can expect to receive if prevailing patterns of age-specific enrolment rates persist throughout the child's life.<sup>[4]</sup>

### Income index

Income index is constructed from gross national income (GNI) per capita.

- Gross national income (GNI) per capita: Aggregate income of an economy generated by its production and its ownership of factors of production, less the incomes paid for the use of factors of production owned by the rest of the world, converted to international dollars using purchasing power parity (PPP) rates, divided by midyear population.<sup>[4]</sup>

## HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX AND SOUTH EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES

Human Development Index (HDI) is computed every year since 1990 by the UNDP, measures average achievements in basic human development and assigns ranks to countries.<sup>[2]</sup> In 2011, India ranked 134 out of more than 190 countries.

In South East Asia, India stood fifth in HDI, behind Sri Lanka, Thailand, Maldives and Indonesia. India's HDI is almost equivalent to average HDI of South East Asian countries as shown in Figure 2. (All the calculation are done by excluding data from DPR Korea as the data is not available)

## COMPONENTS OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX

### Health index

Human development is directly connected with the health of an individual and also the populations. Health parameter, especially life expectancy at birth is an important ingredient of human development index.

The healthier a person is, the longer he or she lives. The average life expectancy of the population indicated the physical health conditions of the people. Wealthier population can afford private medical care and generally live longer, while the longevity of poor crucially depends on conditions of public health, nutrition and sanitation services.<sup>[2]</sup>

Figure 3 depict that South East Asian countries, including Maldives (76.8), Sri Lanka (74.9) and Thailand (74.1) have life expectancy at birth greater than global average. The situation of India (65.4) is quite pity. Timor-Leste (62.5)

has the lowest life expectancy at birth followed by Myanmar (65.2) in South East Asian countries [Figure 3].

### Education index

Literacy rate measures the human capital (i.e. productive skills and knowledge) of the population. Only Sri Lanka shows better mean years of schooling as compared to global data. In South East Asia, expected years of schooling is 10.9 years. However, mean years of schooling is 4.8. The performance of India in educating its population has been poor compared to other South East Asian countries [Figures 4 and 5].

### Income index

GNI of South East Asian countries are far below than global average which is 3,761.9. Thailand, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka shows better GNI per capita as compared to other South East Asian countries as depicted in Figure 6.

## HDI AND INDIA

In the Indian context, development may be defined as sustained increase in the real per capita income and a good standard of living with an improvement in the distribution of material welfare. According to this definition, development process has two sides - formation of human capabilities by the people. If a proper balance of two sides of development is not maintained, it could lead towards human frustration and social disintegration.<sup>[5]</sup>

Figure 7 shows HDI trend in India. HDI during 80s was 0.344 and thereafter shows improvement till 2009. In 2010, there was a marginal increase of 0.007. Similarly, in 2011 HDI was 0.547 with a minor increase of 0.005.

According to the World Bank (2010), total health expenditure (sum of public and private health expenditure) is 4.1% of GDP in India, out of which only 29.2% is through public.<sup>[7,8]</sup> Life expectancy of Indians is 65.4, which is pathetic as compared to other South East Asian countries. Recent data shows that India's health indicators such as MMR (212),<sup>[9]</sup> IMR (50),<sup>[9]</sup> Under 5 mortality rate (64),<sup>[9]</sup> full immunization (61%),<sup>[10]</sup> no immunization (7.6%)<sup>[10]</sup> are miserable. The latest UNICEF data shows that one third of the world's children who are wasted lives in India, whilst 43% of the nation's children under 5 years of age are underweight and 48% of children under 5 years of age surveyed were stunted. India accounts for more than 3 out of every 10 stunted children in the world.<sup>[11]</sup> *Nation Rural Health Mission (NRHM)*,<sup>[12]</sup> *Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)*<sup>[13]</sup> etc has been launched with the aim to improve the health indicators of nation, especially rural areas.

Literacy is a key for socio-economic progress in India. Education in India is provided by the public sector, as well as the private sector. The private education market in India is merely 5%. The Indian literacy rate grew to 74.04% in 2011 from 12% at the end of British rule in 1947. India currently has the largest illiterate population of any nation

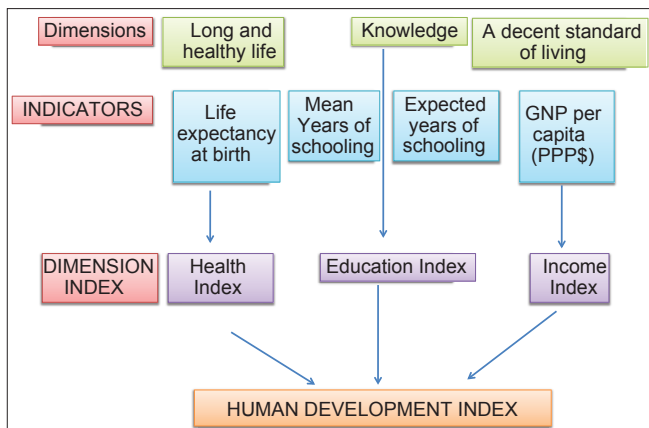


Figure 1: Human Development Index

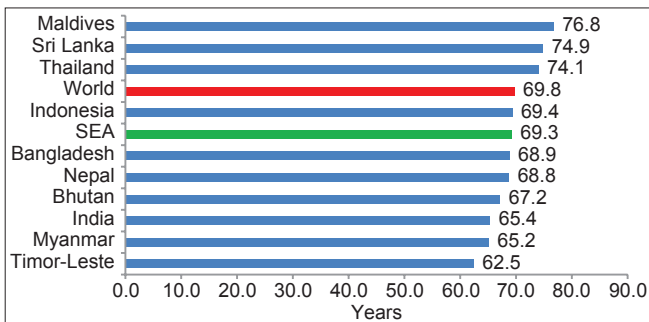


Figure 3: Life expectancy at birth (2011)

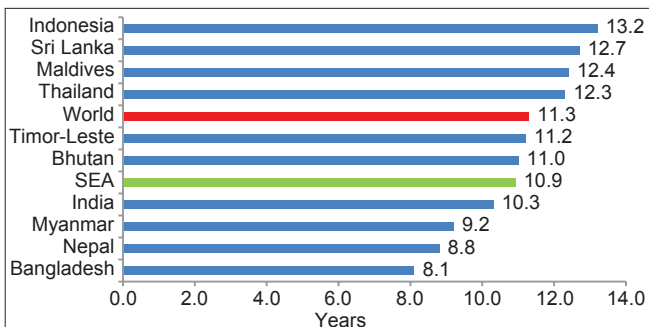


Figure 5: Expected years of schooling (2011)

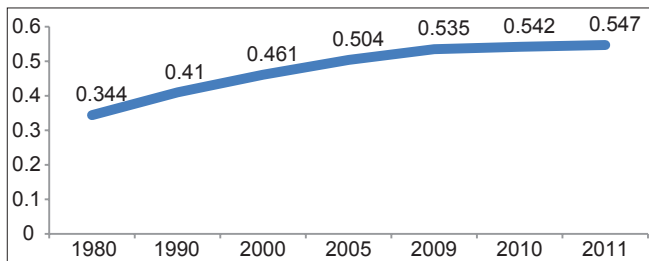


Figure 7: HDI trend in India

on earth.<sup>[14]</sup> Nation's mean year of schooling is 4.4 whereas an expected year of schooling is 10.3. Reasons for low literacy rate are the absence of adequate school infrastructure like improper facilities and inefficient teaching staff. The average pupil teacher ratio for all India is 1:42, implying teacher

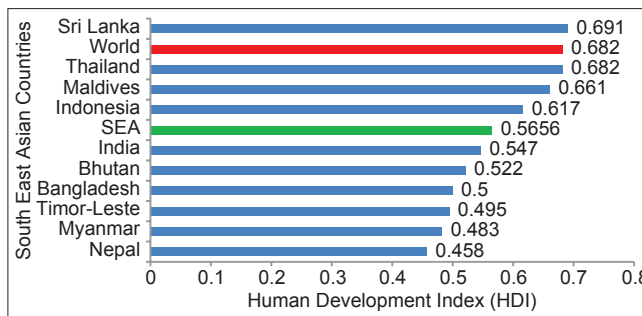


Figure 2: HDI in SEA countries (2011)

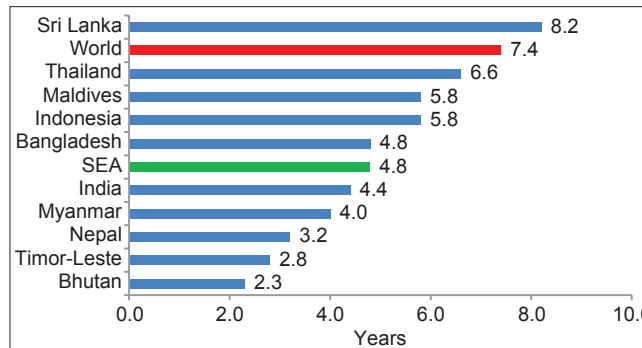


Figure 4: Mean years of schooling (2011)

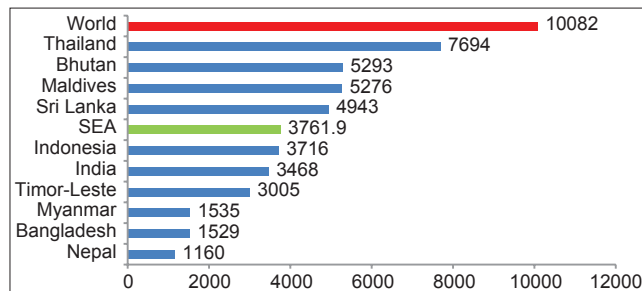


Figure 6: Gross national income (GNI) per capita (constant 2005 PPP\$)

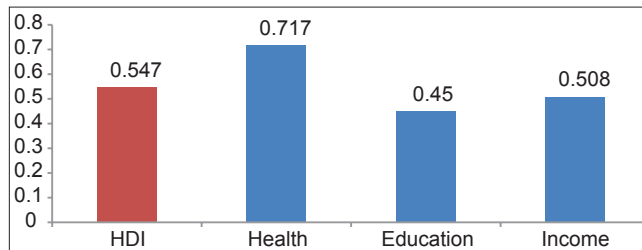


Figure 8: HDI India: Health, education and income

shortage. Absolute poverty in India has also deterred the pursuit of formal education as education is not deemed of as the highest priority among the poor as compared to other basic necessities. The large proportion of illiterate females is another reason for low literacy in India. Inequality based on gender differences resulted in female literacy rates being lower than male counterparts. There is a wide gender disparity in the literacy rate in India. The National Literacy

Mission, launched in 1988, aimed at attaining a literacy rate of 75% by 2007. The Total Literacy Campaign is the principal strategy of the NLM for eradication of illiteracy. The Sarva Siksha Abhiyan was launched in 2001 to ensure that all children in the 6-14 year age-group attend school and complete 8 years of schooling.<sup>[14]</sup>

Poverty in India is widespread, with the nation estimated to have a third of the world's poor. According to 2010 data from the United Nations Development Program, an estimated 37.2% of Indians live below the country's national poverty line.<sup>[15]</sup> Government of India has launched various schemes and programs for poverty alleviation such as *National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA)*,<sup>[16]</sup> *Pradhan Mantra Gramodaya Yojana (PMGY)*,<sup>[17]</sup> *Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)*<sup>[18]</sup> and *Sampoorna Grameen Rojgar Yojana (SGRY)*<sup>[19]</sup> with the objective to create sustainable employment, especially in the rural areas.

India's HDI value has improved with time but still country has a long way to go in achieving an acceptable HDI [Figure 8]. Need is to strengthen the existing schemes and programs.

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