

FROM THE UN

THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2013

The annual Human Development Report of 2013 evaluates the global scale of well being, : life expectancy, education and income. This report reveals that people worldwide, are living longer, a greater number of children are in school, hundreds of millions of people have been lifted out of extreme poverty and many more have been propelled into the global middle class. The report shows that the proportion of people living in extreme poverty worldwide. has gone down from 43% in 1990 to 22 % in 2008. In 1950 it was an unbelievable 50 percent.

Many developing countries have shown progress, especially the larger ones: Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, South Africa and Turkey. However, a large number of smaller countries in what is called 'the rise of the South' have done particularly well e.g. Bangladesh, Chile, Ghana , Rwanda and Tunisia.

Well-being must be assessed not only in terms of money and the Gross National Product (GNP) but in human development . A human development index(HDI) was created to capture elements of well-being. The HDI is a composite of life expectancy, education and income , The HDI index showed Norway, Australia and the United States lead the ranking. However, some caution is needed in interpreting this information. National averages hide large variations in human experience and wide disparities within countries of both North and South. The United States has a high HDI value overall but a much lower HDI for Latino residents and African- Americans.

The UN has developed an inequality-adjusted HDI. When the HDI is adjusted for internal inequalities in health ,education and income some of the wealthiest nations fall sharply in the ranking. The United States falls from number 3 to number 16. Sweden by contrast rises from no.7 to no. 4. Because of increasing inequalities over a billion people are still severely poor.

What is needed to keep up the momentum of progress and lessen the number of poor ?

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Few countries have sustained rapid progress without impressive levels of public investment in infrastructure , health care, education and social programs.

Examples of innovative social programs are the conditional cash transfer programs (CCT) in Brazil, India, Mexico and many others. They have helped to narrow income gaps and improved health and education in poor communities. These programs require families to send their children to school and get periodic medical checkups.

In 2007 New York City launched a three year pilot program called Oportunidades NYC family rewards. Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York City traveled to Mexico to see their Oportunidades program in action. Upon his return he said "No one has a monopoly on good ideas".

There are many challenges to keeping up the momentum of progress. Among the greatest are environmental threats such as climate change, deforestation, air and water pollution.

The rising global middle class, is an historic achievement , but also presents challenges. If the new middle class adopts the western life style it will aggravate the problem of climate change. Also , a rising middle class with their usual higher expectations, both in opportunities and participation is a problem if political structures are inflexible and non-responsive. This is particularly true with a high proportion of young people.

Let's hope the achievements of progress can be sustained.

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