

Human Development and Deprivation in Meghalaya



P. NAYAK ● E.D. THOMAS

**HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
AND
DEPRIVATION IN MEGHALAYA**

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FOREWORD

The concept of human development has significantly advanced our thinking on development by shifting the focus away from economic indicators such as income or per capital GNP towards what people really have reasons to value. The premise that people are the real wealth of nations led a group of economists in early 1990s to define human development as a process of expanding people's choices and opportunities. Some aspects of human development are related to people's physical well-being, such as health, nutrition and education, and others are directly to the widening of choice and enhanced empowerment, including participation, political freedom and cultural aspects. The concept caught serious attention within a short period of time and UNDP's annual publication of Human Development Report has become an eagerly awaited ritual for the people of all spheres of life. The intellectual antecedents of this new development paradigm may be traced to the ideas of Aristotle and Immanuel Kant, which is parallel to the ideas of Adam Smith, Robert Malthus and John Stuart Mill. But for a long time policy-makers seemed to forget this simple, yet profound truth. They were caught up with the rise and fall of national incomes and often lost sight of the real end of development - people's well-being.

The new development paradigm views human development as a process - not as an event. Hence, it is felt necessary to review the economies, nations, states or regions time to time in the light of holistic concepts and methodologies, development largely by a number of economists, social scientists, development practitioners and intellectuals of different spheres of life across the globe under the banner of UNDP

India and her states are no way exceptions in this regard. There are two major concerns in this regard. First is the poor rate of success over decades in translating India's economic achievements into a decent level of human development. Second is that the quality of life has become increasingly uneven across the states, regions, communities, genders etc.

The present study seeks to address some of the issues of development trajectory of the state of Meghalaya keeping people's welfare and aspirations at the centre and hence, perhaps, is the first of this kind for the State. It is a serious effort to focus and examine the path of progress in Meghalaya during the past few decades in terms of human development indicators. I personally appreciate the initiative of the authors in a situation when the initiative for the publication of Meghalaya State Human Development Report: is yet to be undertaken. Attempts have been made in this study to construct human development indices for the State as a whole as well as for all the seven districts of Meghalaya on the basis of primary data collected from 1020 households. The study reveals the significant divergence in human development and deprivation that exists over seven districts of the State. It also presents a clear picture of relative position of the State in the country in terms of a number of economic and social parameters. It points out how Meghalaya is biased in favour of urban settlements at the cost of rural areas. There is an attempt to identify the sectors and areas, which needs immediate attention of the government and policy-makers.

I commend this book for wider dissemination, intense discussion and constructive debate on the issues revealed by the authors in this book. That, I hope, would result in the form of some strong and credible policy initiatives towards evolving an inclusive and stable political economy, which will ensure quality growth, job opportunities and balanced human development for Meghalaya in future.

Dated 5th March 2007

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PREFACE

Meghalaya is one of the smallest States in India and the third biggest State in the North-Eastern Region. It is predominantly a tribal State. According to 2001 Census the State had a population of 23.06 lakhs, which was about 6.0 per cent of the total population of the region and 0.2 per cent of the population of the country. It had population density of 103 persons per sq. km, sex ratio of 975 and literacy rate of 63.3 per cent. Nearly 20 per cent of the population lived in urban areas.

Although the State has predominantly an agricultural economy and 63 per cent of her work force engaged in agriculture, its contribution to SDP was only 33 per cent as against 55 per cent by the tertiary sector. The extent of industrialization had been very low and slow in the State. There were about two hundred registered small scale industrial units. The growth of per capita net SDP in the past decade was quite low and it stood at Rs. 9003 in 2000 at 1993-94 (constant) prices when 34 per cent of people were below poverty line.

The State in comparison to all India situations performed better in respect of sanitation facilities, female and urban literacy, reduction of urban poverty, employment generation, reduction in incidence of unemployment, rural infant mortality, gender disparity and human development but lagged in road connectivity to villages, construction of quality houses, supply of safe drinking water, electricity consumption, per capita SDP, reduction of rural-urban disparity, rural and male literacy, rural poverty and urban infant mortality. Relative rank of Meghalaya among the States and Union Territories over time improved in respects of urban literacy and urban Human Development

Index (HDI) but deteriorated in per capita GDP and per capita consumption expenditure, poverty, rural literacy, infant mortality and rural HDI. The HDI improved both in rural and urban areas during 1981-91 but not quite significantly as compared to other States in India. Though rural-urban and male-female gap declined during the period it could not be contained satisfactorily. The State was biased in favour of urban areas and female population.

There is also widespread variation across all the seven districts within the State of Meghalaya in various socio-economic indicators such as literacy, infant mortality, per capita income and expenditure, poverty, infrastructure, human development, etc. The State has inadequate health facilities. The growth of per capita Net District Domestic Product in the State is quite low. Amenities like *pucca* houses, sanitation, safe drinking water, electricity, medical facilities, etc. are inadequate and most of the amenities are far away from the households. Per capita monthly income and consumption expenditure are as low as Rs. 650 and Rs. 498 respectively. There are mainly three sources of income, i.e. agriculture, service and daily wages. About 36 per cent of the total income come from agriculture, 35 per cent from service, 15 per cent from wages and the rest 14 per cent from various other sources including business, handloom and handicrafts, etc. People devote about 62 per cent of their expenditure on food items. The literacy index is as high as 0.683 in the State. Infant mortality index is as low as 0.012. Income and expenditure indices are as low as 0.480 and 0.313 respectively. HDI is as low as 0.406.

The study has been divided into six chapters in all. The first chapter is mainly an introductory one that has not only introduced the problem but also made an attempt to explain the concept of human development, its measurement in historical perspectives and its superiority over other development measures. This chapter also includes the review of literatures on human development, the methodology of data collection and analysis and a brief report on global scenario on human development. The second chapter is devoted to a brief description about Meghalaya and her economy. Analysis of relative status and growth of development/human development in

Meghalaya and its comparison with that of the country in general and some leading States and Union Territories in particular using secondary data are made in the third chapter. The fourth chapter is devoted to disparities of development in Meghalaya across her seven districts using various socio-economic indicators including human development index. The entire analysis of disparities in the fourth chapter is based on secondary sources of data. The primary data collected for the State are analyzed in the fifth chapter to show the extent of unevenness that exists in the State. Human development of various districts in the State as constructed using primary data is also compared. Summary of the findings of the study and some policies based on the findings are recommended in the sixth chapter.

The conclusions of the present work is based on the data collected for a major research project undertaken in the Department of Economics, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya with financial support from the University Grants Commission, New Delhi. We express our sincere thanks and deep sense of appreciation to the authorities of UGC for their financial support for undertaking the said project without which it would have not been possible to bring the work in its present form. We are thankful to the authorities of North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong for providing all sorts of infrastructural facilities for carrying out the work. We would also like to express our sincere appreciation and thanks to all the colleagues, administrative staff and students in the Department of Economics, NEHU for their keen interest and sustained support during the period of undertaking the work. Many individuals consulted during data analysis and writing of the manuscript provided invaluable information, material and suggestions. We sincerely thank every one of them. Particularly we are thankful to Prof. S.K. Mishra, Prof. B. Mishra and Dr. S. Umdor. Last but not the least all those who were involved in carrying out the work directly or indirectly deserve special thanks.

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