

# Human Development Report **2016**

**Human Development for Everyone**



The 2016 Human Development Report is the latest in the series of global Human Development Reports published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) since 1990 as independent, analytically and empirically grounded discussions of major development issues, trends and policies.

Additional resources related to the 2016 Human Development Report can be found online at <http://hdr.undp.org>, including digital versions of the Report and translations of the overview in more than 20 languages, an interactive web version of the Report, a set of background papers and think pieces commissioned for the Report, interactive maps and databases of human development indicators, full explanations of the sources and methodologies used in the Report's composite indices, country profiles and other background materials as well as previous global, regional and national Human Development Reports. The 2016 Report and the best of Human Development Report Office content, including publications, data, HDI rankings and related information can also be accessed on Apple iOS and Android smartphones via a new and easy to use mobile app.



The cover reflects the basic message that human development is for everyone—in the human development journey no one can be left out. Using an abstract approach, the cover conveys three fundamental points. First, the upward moving waves in blue and whites represent the road ahead that humanity has to cover to ensure universal human development. The different curvature of the waves alerts us that some paths will be more difficult and sailing along those paths will not be easy, but multiple options are open. Second, in this journey some people will be ahead, but some will be lagging behind. Those lagging behind will need helping hands from those who are ahead. The gestures of the two hands reflect that spirit of human solidarity. Third, the two colours—green and blue—and the hands at the top—convey that universal human development requires a balance among planet, peace and people.

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## Human Development for Everyone



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*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*

# Human Development Report 2016 Team

## **Director and lead author**

Selim Jahan

## **Deputy director**

Eva Jespersen

## **Research and statistics**

Shantanu Mukherjee (Team Leader), Milorad Kovacevic (Chief Statistician), Botagoz Abdreyeva, Astra Bonini, Cecilia Calderon, Christelle Cazabat, Yu-Chieh Hsu, Christina Lengfelder, Patrizia Luongo, Tanni Mukhopadhyay, Shivani Nayyar and Heriberto Tapia

## **Production and web**

Admir Jahic and Dharshani Seneviratne

## **Outreach and communications**

Jon Hall, Sasa Lucic, Jennifer O'Neil Oldfield and Anna Ortubia

## **Operations and administration**

Sarantuya Mend (Operations Manager), Fe Juarez Shanahan and May Wint Than



# Foreword

Human development is all about human freedoms: freedom to realize the full potential of every human life, not just of a few, nor of most, but of all lives in every corner of the world—now and in the future. Such universalism gives the human development approach its uniqueness.

However, the principle of universalism is one thing; translating it into practice is another. Over the past quarter-century there has been impressive progress on many fronts in human development, with people living longer, more people rising out of extreme poverty and fewer people being malnourished. Human development has enriched human lives—but unfortunately not all to the same extent, and even worse, not every life.

It is thus not by chance but by choice that world leaders in 2015 committed to a development journey that leaves no one out—a central premise of the 2030 Agenda. Mirroring that universal aspiration, it is timely that the 2016 Human Development Report is devoted to the theme of human development for everyone.

The Report begins by using a broad brush to paint a picture of the challenges the world faces and the hopes humanity has for a better future. Some challenges are lingering (deprivations), some are deepening (inequalities) and some are emerging (violent extremism), but most are mutually reinforcing. Whatever their nature or reach, these challenges have an impact on people's well-being in both present and future generations.

At the same time, however, the Report reminds us what humanity has achieved over the past 25 years and gives us hope that further advances are possible. We can build on what we have achieved, we can explore new possibilities to overcome challenges and we can attain what once seemed unattainable. Hopes are within our reach to realize.

Given that broader context, the Report then raises two fundamental questions: who has been left out in progress in human development and how and why did that happen. It emphasizes that poor, marginalized and vulnerable groups—including ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, refugees and

migrants—are being left furthest behind. The barriers to universalism include, among others, deprivations and inequalities, discrimination and exclusion, social norms and values, and prejudice and intolerance. The Report also clearly identifies the mutually reinforcing gender barriers that deny many women the opportunities and empowerment necessary to realize the full potential of their lives.

To ensure human development for everyone, the Report asserts that merely identifying the nature of and the reasons for the deprivation of those left out is not enough. Some aspects of the human development analytical framework and assessment perspectives must be brought to the fore to address issues that prevent universal human development. For example, human rights and human security, voice and autonomy, collective capabilities and the interdependence of choices are key for the human development of those currently left out. Similarly, quality of human development outcomes and not only quantity, going beyond the averages and disaggregating statistics (particularly gender-disaggregation)—must be considered to assess and ensure that human development benefits reach everyone.

The Report forcefully argues that caring for those left out requires a four-pronged policy strategy at the national level: reaching those left out using universal policies (for example, inclusive growth, not mere growth), pursuing measures for groups with special needs (for example, persons with disabilities), making human development resilient and empowering those left out.

The Report rightly recognizes that national policies need to be complemented by actions at the global level. It addresses issues related to the mandate, governance structures and work of global institutions. It draws our attention to the fact that even though we have grown accustomed to heated debates winding up in gridlock at the national, regional and global levels, underneath the rumble of all that, consensus has been emerging around many global challenges to ensure a sustainable world for future generations. The landmark Paris

Agreement on climate change, which recently came into force, bears testimony to this. What was once deemed unthinkable must now prove to be unstoppable.

The Report complements the 2030 Agenda by sharing the principle of universalism and by concentrating on such fundamental areas as eliminating extreme poverty, ending hunger and highlighting the core issue of sustainability. The human development approach and the 2030 Agenda can be mutually reinforcing by contributing to the narrative of each other, by exploring how human development and Sustainable Development Goal indicators can complement each other and by being a forceful advocacy platform for each other.

We have every reason to hope that transformation in human development is possible.

What seem to be challenges today can be overcome tomorrow. The world has fewer than 15 years to achieve its bold agenda of leaving no one out. Closing the human development gap is critical, as is ensuring the same, or even better, opportunities for future generations. Human development has to be sustained and sustainable and has to enrich every human life so that we have a world where all people can enjoy peace and prosperity.



Helen Clark

*Administrator*

United Nations Development Programme



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The findings, analysis and policy recommendations of the Report are those of HDRO alone and cannot be attributed to UNDP or to its Executive Board. The UN General Assembly has officially recognized the Human Development Report as “an independent intellectual exercise” that has become “an important tool for raising awareness about human development around the world.”

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Selim Jahan

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