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Issue Brief

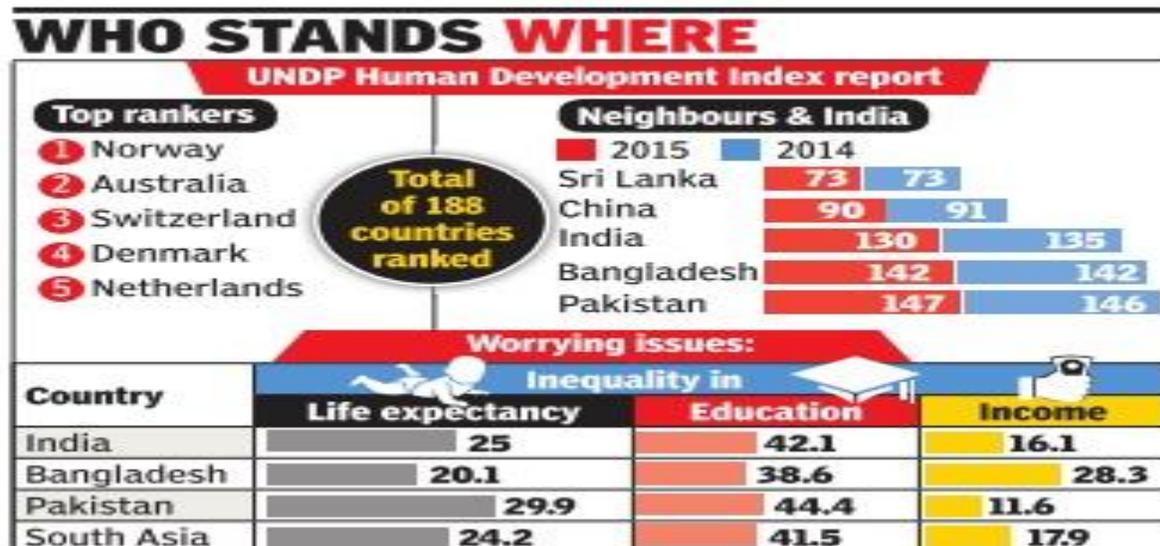
Pakistan's Development Dilemma

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Progress in human development remains a very pertinent issue for developing economies like Pakistan. The geopolitical scenario has changed significantly and there is accelerated growth in developing economies like India, Pakistan, Malaysia and other South and East Asian economies. And just as the world is brought closer by the forces of globalization, it can be seen that the situation has improved significantly with the decrease in mortality rates as well as more children going to school and having access to a better life.

However, unfortunately, Pakistan is ranked 147 out of the 188 countries surveyed for human development, according to a new UN report, bracketing it alongside South Asian neighbours, including India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal.¹ Pakistan has made no improvement in its ranking over the previous year, though its Human Development Index rank in 2014 was 148. According to the latest annual report of the UN Development Programme i.e. Human Development Report 2016, 63 per cent Pakistanis were 'satisfied' with their standard of living in 2014-15. The ranking put Pakistan in the 'medium human development' bracket, which also includes India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kenya, Myanmar and Nepal.



Despite Pakistan's lower ranking, it may be seen that in September 2000, the UN adopted the Millennium Declaration at the historical Millennium Summit. At least 193 countries and 23 international organisations agreed to address eight time-bound targets known as the Millennium Development Goals

(MDGs) by 2015. These included reduction of extreme poverty, hunger and disease and promotion of gender equality, education and environmental sustainability. Although the international community was mostly ineffective in achieving these quantified targets by the end of 2015, Pakistan also lagged behind in achieving the desired targets. The Millennium Development Goals have now been replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals after the year 2015.

Pakistan faces several challenges when it comes to achieving its sustainable development goals although by signing up to the SDGs, Pakistan has aligned its development plan, Vision 2025, with the targets outlined in the UN's 2030 Agenda. The focus of the SDGs is achieving all-encompassing growth and sustainable development. The proposed agenda also suggests that countries must devise national indicators to show the progress achieved. Given the weak socio-economic indicators, how well Pakistan fares will largely depend on political will and resource allocation.²

It is of utmost importance to consider the fact that negotiating the path towards sustainable development is not easy for any country acting on its own. Pakistan's experience is evidence of the challenges, given that levels of foreign investment, trade and development assistance have fluctuated over the years, both assisting and hampering development. Upcoming success or failure when meeting the targets set by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will ultimately depend on Sustainable Development Goal 17 that aims to revitalise global partnerships for development by building domestic means to execute the SDGs. The Sustainable Development Goal 17 is particularly aimed at various important targets which include partnerships in several areas like finance, technology, capacity building, trade and other systemic issues.³ This goal particularly involves regional and international partnerships between developed and developing countries, thus extending support to the latter.

Global partnerships must have wide-ranging elements: more development assistance, debt relief, trade agreements that help developing countries find markets and better conditions for foreign and domestic investment. Funding - public, private, national and global - has to be all-embracing to meet the demands of development. Equally significant is the country's capacity to ensure that its science and technological capabilities serve all segments of the society, including the poor, so that lasting, equitable development for all becomes an achievable target.⁴

For Pakistan, being a rapidly urbanised country in South Asia, it is important to note that the developmental challenges have become larger than ever before due to a number of reasons. Migration from rural areas, prompted by the need for jobs and a better life have lead to even more challenges.

These include poor housing quality and affordability, access to education, health, water and sanitation and among others, land management, as there is an increase in the unplanned urban sprawl in the shape of illegal settlements.

Achieving development targets is an arduous task for a developing country like Pakistan. The lack of implementation is also a very grave challenge as majority of the planned projects do not see the light of the day. With an exploding population, it has become increasingly difficult for Pakistan to achieve economic growth while preserving the natural capacity of the society. Constant population growth is like a ticking time bomb, which, coupled with a degradation in resources makes the development challenge far more difficult. Therefore, efforts need be made to achieve a decent level of development, which is only possible if a sincere endeavour is made to implement the development plans with full vigour.

Notes and References:

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- ¹ Human Development Report 2016, hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2016_human_development_report.pdf
 - ² Pakistan's Development Challenges, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1285042>
 - ³ Sustainable Development Goals: 17 Goals to Transform our World, <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/globalpartnerships/>
 - ⁴ Neil Buhne, PAKISTAN'S CHALLENGES: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS 2015-2030: Looking inwards: the new development paradigm, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1288528>