

India's Shameful Human Development Record

Sunday 28 November 2010, by [CPI \(ML\) Liberation](#) (Date first published: 16 November 2010).

The recently released UN Human Development Report 2010 has revealed India's sorry record of human development and tackling inequalities.

Some of the facts revealed by the report are as follows :

India has been ranked among top 10 global countries on income gain. But India's HDI ranking (adjusted to take into account multidimensional inequalities) is a dismal 119 among 134 nations. More than half (55%) of India's population are multi-dimensionally poor (taking account of indicators like health, schooling, drinking water, decent work and so on). Eight Indian States (Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal) are home to 421 million multi-dimensionally poor people, more than the figure of 410 million in 26 poorest African countries. One of the chief factors dragging India back in terms of its human development performance is its failure to address gender inequality. The Gender Inequality Index in the Report shows that Indian women face greater gender inequality than their sisters in many of its less prosperous and more backward neighbours, including Pakistan.

In the overall Human Development Index, India ranks 119 and Pakistan, 125. But in the Gender Inequality Index, Pakistan is ahead of India at 112, while India lags behind at 122. Even Bangladesh (at 116) and Nepal (at 110) are ahead of India when it comes to women's welfare and rights. India has a much higher maternal mortality - 450 mothers in India (as compared to 320 in Pakistan) die in childbirth per 100,000 live births. India also has a greater rate of under-age mothers than Pakistan does. India also has a dismal sex ratio (108.5 male births per every 100 female births), again worse than Pakistan's performance on this score. In states like Gujarat, Haryana and Punjab (relatively more prosperous and 'developing') as well as the national capital Delhi, the sex ratio soars to 126 male births per 100 female births.

Another report : WEF's Global Gender Gap Report 2010 says India's position is abysmal. The Global Gender Gap Report's index assesses 134 countries on how well they divide resources and opportunities amongst male and female populations, regardless of the overall levels of these resources. The report measures the size of the gender inequality gap in four areas : (1) Economic participation and opportunity - outcomes on salaries, participation levels and access to high-skilled employment, (2) Educational attainment - outcomes on access to basic and higher level education, (3) Political empowerment - outcomes on representation in decision-making structures, (4) Health and survival - outcomes on life expectancy and sex ratio. Out of 134 countries surveyed, India is among the lowest ranked countries at the 112th position, with a score of 0.6155. The index ranks 134 economies according to the size of the gaps between men and women.

"India (112) occupies one of the last places in the regional rankings. India has not been making much improvement over the years. In 2006, it was ranked 98, but dropped to 114 in 2007, climbed to 113 in 2008, dropped to 114 in 2009, and climbed back to 112 in 2010. In other words, the persistent health, education and economic participation gaps haven't been making much headway despite having a woman as the President, and a woman leading the country's ruling political party",

the report says.

India has lacked the courage and commitment to pass the Women's Reservation Bill, and as a result women's representation in Indian Parliament stands at a dismal 9%. Even our neighbours like Pakistan and Nepal have shown greater will to challenge inequality - thanks to laws reserving seats for women, Pakistan has 21.2% women in parliament and Nepal, 33%.

The Indian Government never tires of boasting about India's rising global prestige and progress. But can a country where the numbers of mothers who die in childbirth and daughters killed in the womb are on the rise, and where the government is too weak in political courage to tackle the feudal violence of honour crimes, really claim to be 'progressive' or even modern and democratic ?

P.S.

* From ML Update. A CPI(ML) Weekly News Magazine, Vol. 13, No. 47 16 - 22 Nov. 20107.