

INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT RECORD IS POOR. IT'S BEST TO ACCEPT IT AND MAKE AMENDS

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Issues relating to Growth & Development - Demographic Economics & various Indexes

Last week, three separate global reports related to development were released: the World Bank's Human Capital Index; the Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide's 2018 Global Hunger Index; and Oxfam International's 2018 Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index. India performs poorly in all three reports. On the Human Capital Index, which seeks to measure the amount of human capital that a child born today can expect to attain by the age of 18, India is ranked at 115 out of 157 countries. On the hunger index, India is at 103 out of 119 countries, with hunger levels in the country categorised as "serious". On the inequality index, India continues to do poorly, ranking 147 out of 157 countries in its commitment to reducing inequality. Earlier in September, the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index placed India at 130 out of 189 countries.

While these reports have their own parameters and methodologies for judging the performances of nation-states, the consistent aspect is India's low rank in all of them. There could be multiple reasons for such a report card: poor State capacity, inadequate funding, inefficient governance, wrong policies, poor implementation and corruption. But none of these issues can be improved/solved, unless we accept that there is a problem. And that's where the reluctance of the government seems surprising. Last week, the Indian government rejected the World Bank's Human Capital Index report, saying the score for India does not reflect the key initiatives that are being taken for developing human capital in the country. Instead of denial, a much bolder step would be to increase investments and strengthen delivery in key areas such as health and education, which have inter-generational impacts, and can also go a long way in removing widespread inequality.

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