



2009 Human Development Awards for Excellence

Paradise Hotel, Busan, the Republic of Korea

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General Analysis

Each of the long-listed reports has adequately addressed the basic corporate principles as outlined in the Human Development Report (HDR) Tool Kit. The outstanding reports were those that not only included the corporate principles, but did so well beyond the minimum standards. In addition to this, exceptional reports were those that promoted innovative approaches to disseminating their messages, data collection or measurements. Furthermore, the strongest NHDRs were those in which country specific analyses and recommendations were made, yet offered research and analyses that could be replicated elsewhere.

Human Development Conceptual Framework:

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges for producing an excellent NHDR is in promoting a strong Human Development (HD) conceptual framework for the policy prescriptions and data presented in each report. Although many reports presented very strong data analysis, for some, this analysis did not effectively relate to an overall Human Development paradigm. Exceptional NHDRs were those which articulated the human development approach by explicitly applying it to technical issues and the analysis. Although the challenge is clear, it is critical that all NHDRs define report findings in terms of HD frameworks that can be a) implemented and b) evaluated and measured.

Theme:

The selection of the theme has implications for the scope and the size of the research, for the recommendations and the influence on national policy debate.

Selecting and defining an NHDR theme is a crucial stage of the report preparation process. Theme quality significantly enhanced the quality of data and message dissemination for many of the most successful reports. For example, the 2008 Turkey, 2008 Egypt and 2008 Bolivia report teams chose themes for which there were extensive existing networks on which they could gather data and other inputs. The Turkish team incorporated the well established youth movement participants in its report preparation and data collection, the Egyptian team consulted and gathered information from an extensive network of Civil Society Organizations, and the Colombian team utilized local government and organizational communities to support their reports. In this way, the thematic choice of each of these three report teams maximized their ability to gather data and disseminate their messages.

Scope of Research and Level of Analysis Detail:

Some report themes require quite specific research and analysis, while for others, a broad research scope and recommendations are more appropriate.

For example, the Bolivian report about the alternative use of natural resources set the scope of analysis quite narrowly, which was appropriate given the main focus of the report theme. As a result, this report promoted very specific policy recommendations that may be difficult to scale-up, but given the context, were most appropriate.

On the contrary, the Egyptian report on civil society opted for a broader theme. After consulting with a wide range of actors and examining issues such as rule of law, democracy, transparency and accountability, partnership and other governance issues, the report formulated a set of policy recommendations which are, due to the nature of the topic, rather broad and all-encompassing.

Clear Policy Prescriptions and Implications:

Another area in which some reports excelled was in translating the key finding messages into clear policy prescriptions. Not only did these reports have easily identified recommendations, the most successful of the reports outlined the economic implications associated with recommendation outcomes (or consequences of not implementing recommendations). The provision of measurable evidence to support policy recommendations was a defining characteristic of the most successful reports.

Participation, Capacity Building and Policy Impact

A comprehensive, broad-based participation process which contributes to capacity building among contributing report participants promotes larger policy impacts. For example, in Turkey, the participatory report preparation process directly incorporated youth which, besides directly contributing to capacity development, promoted strong support for the report, and in turn, improved the influence of report recommendations on national youth policy.

Similarly, the elaboration of the 2008 Colombia Valle del Cauca subnational report was characterized by extensive participation in the process, resulting in a great deal of active support from stakeholders in their region, both during the preparatory activities, launch and post launch activities.

Measurement and Data

Sound data collection and analysis, both on a qualitative and on a quantitative level, is one of the basic pillars of each NHDR. In the selection process, Bosnia and Herzegovina 2007 and India – West-Bengal Bankura 2007 were recognized for their solid and innovative analysis of a range of data sources used to inform critical evaluation of policy.

Outreach

A key component of each NHDR is to generate attention on the report topic and its recommendations in order to support policy impact. However, during the awards review process, the policy impacts of most reports were hard to assess, either because

of a lack of a comprehensive outreach strategy or because of a lack coordination for follow-up activities. Yet, outreach should be viewed as a substantial part of the preparation process of the report.

A commendable report in this sense is the 2007 Cambodia report for which a comprehensive, well-designed advocacy strategy was set up and implemented in collaboration with the UNDP Communications unit and the Cambodia Ministry of Planning.

Political Sensitivity of the Issue

It should also be noted, that although the social and political environments in which reports are written do shape the theme selection process. It is equally important to note that the production process involved in NHDRs provide an excellent opportunity for NHDR teams to highlight particularly sensitive social and political issues. One particularly good example of this is provided by the 2008 Swaziland report, in which HIV/AIDs was approached from a cultural perspective.

There is clearly a delicate balance between addressing sensitive issues and achieving gaining government and community support. However, given the independence of the NHDR production process, NHDRs do represent a unique opportunity to engage governments and communities on sensitive issues, an opportunity which should not be underestimated.

Presentation:

Although not an element of review criteria, it must be noted that in terms of graphic design presentation, some reports provided excellent examples. In this respect, Croatia 2008 and Mongolia 2007 did very well by providing concise and well-arranged reports. Also worth mentioning, are the 2008 Swaziland Report which uses Siswati words, accompanied by a list of their meanings and the Cambodia report which was entirely translated into Khmer language. Making provisions to have their reports translated into local languages enabled report authors to make the report more understandable and accessible to the population it addressed.

Finally, it is extremely important to emphasize that NHDR awards in themselves, are not the main goal of successful reports. Rather, reports that are written so that their messages are well understood and contain clear paths for follow-up should be goal of awards process.