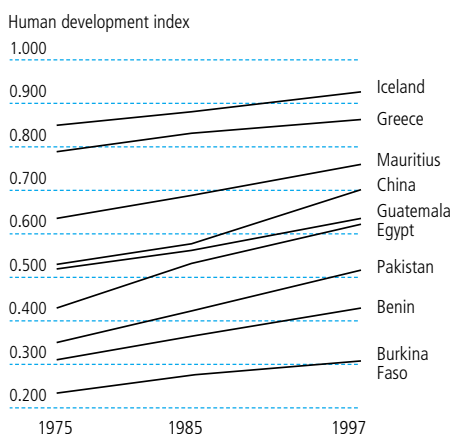


*Since I came to office three years ago, I have adopted pro-human development policies and implemented a wide range of new programmes.
Why, then, are we still the same rank in the human development index?
—An elected president, 1999*

Since its launch in 1990, the HDI has captured the attention of governments, the media and civil society. They compare their country's ranking with their neighbours', often asking why achievements made elsewhere have not been made at home. This use of the HDI gives it additional appeal as a tool for assessing progress in realizing some social and economic rights.

But the high profile of the HDI can lead to misuse. When a country's ranking rises from one year to the next, governments may be tempted to claim credit, pointing to recent policies. And when the ranking falls or stays the same, the media and political opposition may be tempted to blame recent policies. The HDI cannot reflect such short-term impacts of policies. Two of its indicators are slow to change: adult literacy and life expectancy. And although combined gross enrolments and average incomes may vary more year to year, when expressed as national averages they still do not respond much to policies that raise enrolments among illiterate communities or tackle income poverty among the most deprived.

Human Development Report 1999 produced the first long-term trend data for the HDI, for 1975–97. Even across 22 years, progress is gradual at every level of development, as shown in the figure below.



Source: Human Development Report Office.

Framework for assessing progress

Period	Average perspective	Deprivation perspective	Inequality perspective
One period	What is the national average?	Who are the most deprived? By: • Income quintile • Gender • Region • Rural or urban • Ethnic group • Education level	What is the disparity? Between: • Bottom and top income quintiles • Females and males • Worst-off and best-off regions • Rural and urban • Worst-off and best-off ethnic groups • No education and higher education
Over time	How has the national average changed?	How have the most deprived social groups progressed?	How have disparities between social groups changed—have they widened or narrowed?

Neither governments nor the public can wait 20 years to find out whether policies have promoted human development and helped realize human rights. Indicators are needed that capture the shorter-term impacts of policies and that reflect the priorities and principles of rights—indicators that:

- Reveal who are the most deprived—and how their lives are affected by policies. This calls for disaggregation to identify social groups with the worst outcomes so that their progress can be tracked.
- Reflect disparities between groups—such as by gender, ethnicity, region and urban or rural dwelling—to help identify current or historical discrimination and to show whether policies are reducing or exacerbating the gaps.
- Respond to policy measures—so that the findings help in assessing governments' performance. This calls for using variables that respond in the short term—for example, the literacy rate among 15- to 19-year olds rather than the adult literacy rate—but lack of data is a common problem. Responsiveness also calls for using data that are available frequently—at least every five years, for example—but this, too, is still often not possible.

To reflect these demands, three perspectives need to be used simultaneously:

1. *Average perspective*—showing overall progress in the country.
2. *Deprivation perspective*—showing the progress by the most deprived groups.
3. *Inequality perspective*—showing the progress in narrowing inequalities.

This framework, shown in the table above, can be applied in every country, using variables most relevant to each country's most pressing issues. But disaggregated data are needed to make it possible. More and more such data are being collected at the national level, disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, urban or rural dwelling, district, income level, education level and other relevant characteristics.

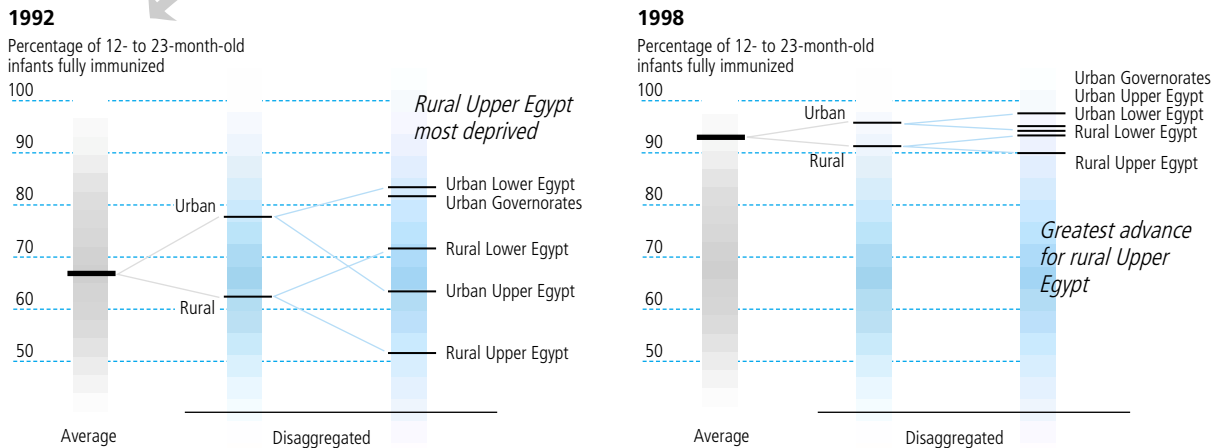
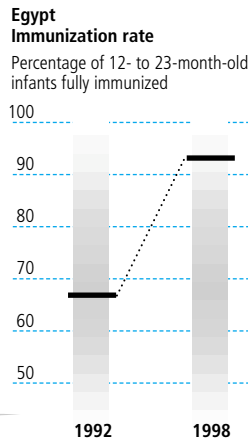
Examples from Benin, Egypt, Guatemala and India show that when data are available for more than one period, the combination of the three perspectives provides new insights. By revealing who are the most deprived—and whether they benefit from national progress—these analyses help in making assessments of the realization of human rights and the achievement of human development.

THREE PERSPECTIVES ON PROGRESS: APPLYING THE FRAMEWORK

This example on immunization of infants in Egypt clearly illustrates the depth that can be revealed by combining three perspectives on the data: average, deprivation and inequality.

Average perspective

In 1992 only 67% of all 12- to 23-month-old infants were fully immunized. By 1998 coverage had risen to 93%, as shown in the figure at right. Impressive progress overall—but how did coverage differ across social groups? Who were the most deprived groups, and how much did they benefit?



Deprivation perspective

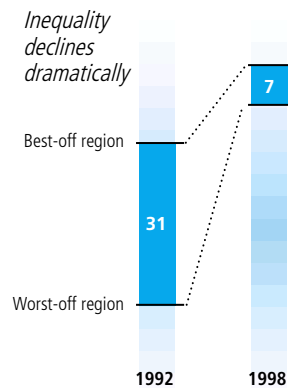
Disaggregating the national average in 1992 reveals the initial disparities across the country—between rural and urban areas and among three regions, the Urban Governorates, Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt. The figures above show the stark contrast: coverage ranged from 83% in urban Lower Egypt to just 52% in rural Upper Egypt.

By 1998, how had the most deprived areas—rural and urban Upper Egypt—benefited from national progress?

Coverage rose to 90% or more in every area, with particularly strong progress in the two most deprived areas. Rural Upper Egypt made especially fast progress in coverage, from 52% to 90%.

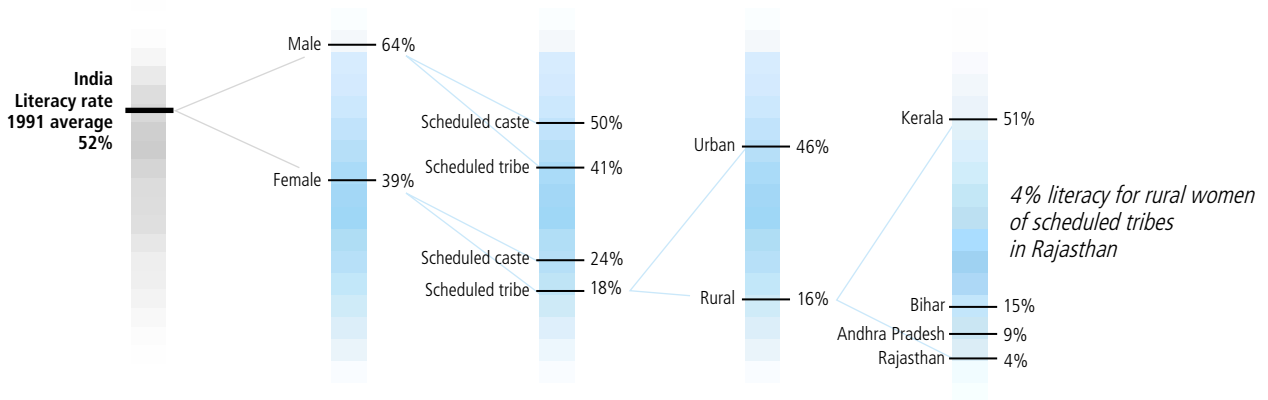
Inequality perspective

What was the impact on inequality? Faster progress among those worst off dramatically reduced inequality between regions. The figure at right shows that the gap between the bottom and top regions was reduced by three-quarters between 1992 and 1998, from 31 percentage points to just 7 points.



WHO ARE THE MOST DEPRIVED? FIRST FOCUS FOR REALIZING RIGHTS

Progress in realizing human rights calls for particular emphasis on ensuring that the most deprived social groups benefit. The first step is to identify them. Data revealing differences between social groups—as far as data availability allows—enable policy-makers to design programmes directly targeting the worse-off.

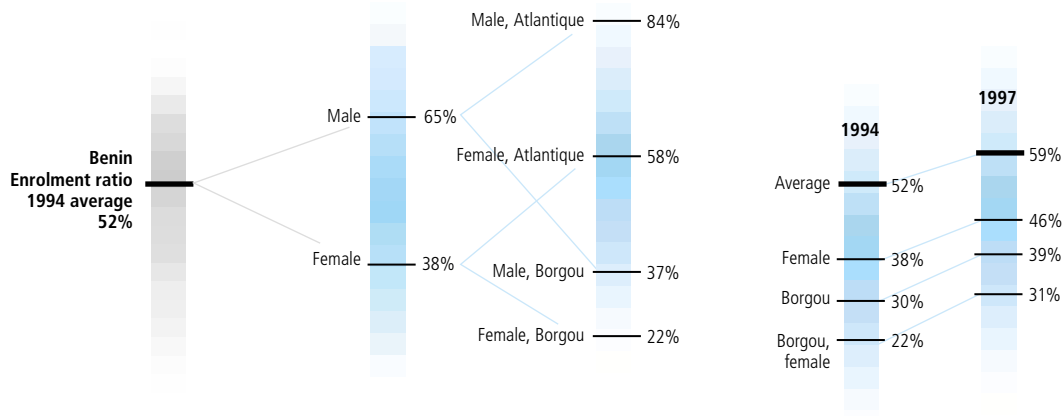


In India this approach could help address the challenge of achieving literacy for all. In 1991, 52% of the population aged seven and above was literate. But breaking data down by gender, some castes and urban or rural dwelling reveals especially extreme deprivation among rural women of scheduled tribes—with a literacy rate of just 16% in 1991. Focusing further on this social group—by disaggregating

across all states—reveals widely differing outcomes. In Kerala in 1991, the literacy rate for rural women of scheduled tribes was 51%, almost the national average. But in several states it was below 15%—and in Rajasthan just 4%. The principles of human rights call for policy measures to tackle the extreme deprivation of these groups.

MAKING PROGRESS: HOW MUCH FOR THE MOST DEPRIVED?

Once the most deprived groups have been identified, data can reveal whether they benefit from national progress—or are excluded from it.

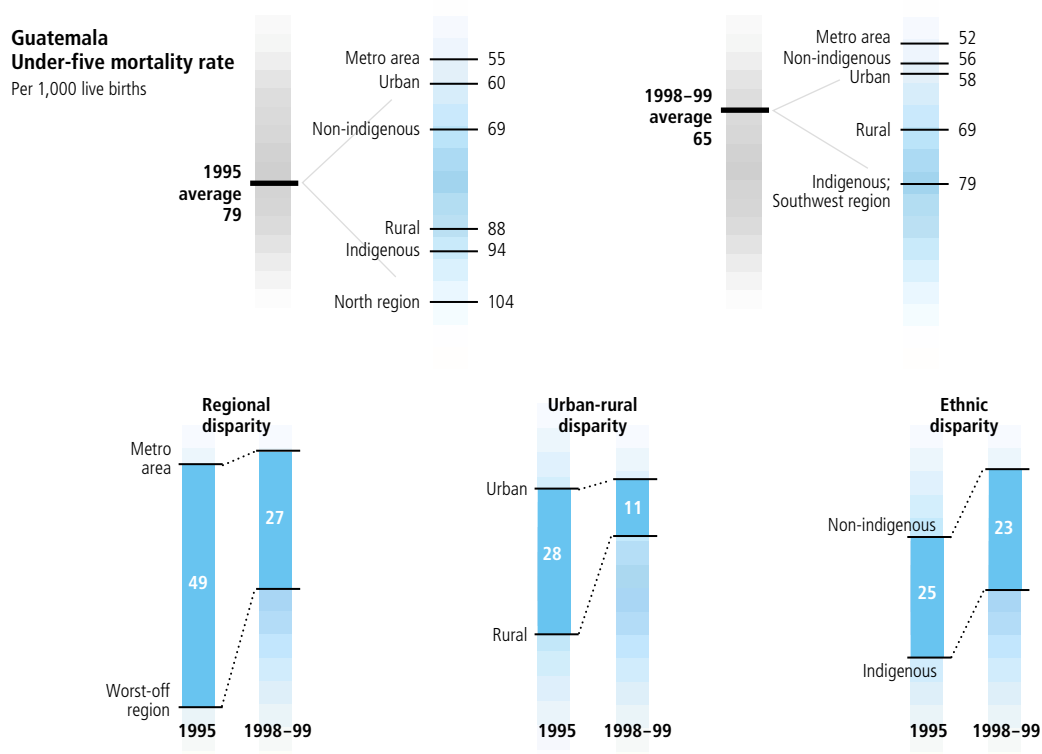


In Benin in 1994, there were wide disparities in school enrolments, by gender and by district. National average net enrolment in primary education was 52%—but it was just 38% for girls, compared with 65% for boys. And there were large differences across districts, with 71% of all children enrolled in Atlantique but only 30% in Borgou. The policy implications? Particular focus was needed on raising female enrolments across the country and raising all enrolments in the most deprived districts. By 1997 national average enrolment had risen 7

percentage points to 59%. How much progress was made for the most deprived? Female enrolment across the country rose 8 percentage points to 46%, total enrolment in Borgou rose 9 points to 39% and female enrolment in Borgou also rose 9 points to 31%. The most deprived groups made slightly faster progress than the national average and so were not left behind—but did not catch up enough to reduce their deprivation compared with achievements in other groups.

TACKLING INEQUALITIES AND OVERCOMING DISCRIMINATION

*How does the progress made by different social groups affect overall inequality in a country?
Reducing disparities among groups can counteract historical discrimination that may have been due
to earlier policies and prejudices.*



Changes in under-five mortality in different social groups in Guatemala reveal diverse impacts on inequality. In 1995 the national average rate—for the 10 years prior to the survey—was 79 deaths per 1,000 live births. But there was great inequality among social groups—between urban and rural, between indigenous and non-indigenous and among regions.

By 1998-99 progress had been made by all groups. But how had inequalities changed? The gap between the worst- and best-performing regions was reduced most—from 49 to 27—but remained wide and in need of continued effort. The rural-urban gap was more than halved—from 28 to 11. But the gap between ethnic groups was reduced only slightly, from 25 to 23—emphasizing the need for increased effort to tackle such disparities.

These studies highlight three priorities:

- *Use disaggregated data for assessing progress in human development and human rights.* Producing statistics that reveal differences by gender, region, ethnicity and other social characteristics is the first step in identifying where progress is needed most and is central to an approach based on the principles of human rights.
- *Focus on the most deprived.* Data on progress by those initially worst-off can

create a picture quite unlike the impression that national averages alone give.

- *Focus on inequality gaps.* Data on progress for the top and bottom groups can reveal whether disparities and historical discrimination are being eliminated or exacerbated.

Governments and civil society in every country can assess progress in these ways, with national

statistical offices increasingly recognizing the importance of collecting data disaggregated by social group. Making such data available is an essential step forward in assessing progress in human development, monitoring the realization of rights and devising policies targeting those most in need. In every country national human development reports can lead by integrating such detailed studies of progress into their analysis.

Source: Osman and El Leithy 2000; Shiva Kumar 2000; Rodas-Martini and Pira 2000; Benin National Institute of Statistics and Economic Analysis 1999; Sori-Coulibaly 2000.