



## Human Development - At the heart of today's policy agenda

More than 360 national and subnational human development reports have been produced by 120 countries, in addition to 9 regional reports. The reports have injected the human development concept into national policy dialogues – not only through human development indicators and policy recommendations, but also through the country-led process of consultation, data collection and report writing.

**Botswana's** 2000 human development report focuses on how HIV/AIDS is reducing economic growth and increasing poverty, and provides policy guidance for political action at the highest levels. The report spurred public discussion on the accessibility of antiretroviral drugs and whether the government should be responsible for providing them. Botswana's minister of health then asked the Bank of Botswana to explore the financial viability of such an approach. Meetings were convened at UNDP with key stakeholders, including the National AIDS Coordinating Agency, the ministry of health, finance and development and major insurance companies. Those consultations led to a decision in March 2001 by the president of Botswana to provide antiretroviral drugs for free to the 17% of the country's people with HIV.

The Philippines' 2000 report analyses the education issues and the challenges facing the Filipino society in coming years. It calls for the country to take advantage of the network age and today's technological transformations. The report spurred major debates on education reform in the country's Senate and Executive Cabinet. The country's 1997 report helped catalyse a presidential directive requiring all local governments to devote at least 20% of domestic revenue to human development priorities.

Many of **India's** 25 states rival medium-size countries in size, population and diversity. The government of Madhya Pradesh was the first to prepare a state report on human development, in 1995, to bring the subject to political discourse and investment planning. By 1998 social services accounted for more than 42% of planned investment, compared with 19% in the previous plan budget. Human development reports have also been prepared in Gujarat, Karnataka and Rajasthan and are under way in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The states' preparation of the reports has made human development priorities an important part of political discourse and development strategies.

**Kuwait's** first human development report, in 1997, raised awareness of the human development concept and its relevance to the country's struggle to shift from dependence on oil towards a knowledge-based economy. The report's production and promotion helped advance new thinking in academia, research institutions and the government. The ministry of Planning has started to monitor human development approach in its indicators for strategic planning. Given the success of the first report, the ministry is following up with a second.

**Colombia's** 2000 report looks at human rights as an intrinsic part of development and shows how they bring principles of accountability and social justice to the development process. Exposing weaknesses in the interpretation and implementation of some constitutional rights, the report has moved debates and dialogues on human rights to a new level, with a vigorous focus on economic, social and cultural rights. The report stresses basic social services, discusses social exclusion and revisits labour rights under globalization, providing a new lens for viewing development in Colombia.

**Bulgaria's** 2000 report, analysing the socio-economic situation in each of the country's 262 municipalities, initiated a healthy competition among neighbouring municipalities to do better in human development. The report has been used in determining the target locations for a large government programme for small-business job creation. It has also sparked constructive debates, in the media and among mayors, governors and ministers, about such issues as decentralization, municipal budgets and educational attainment and subsidies.

After the *Atlas of Human Development in Brazil* – an electronic database with human development indicators for all 5,000 Brazilian municipalities – was launched in 2000, the central government's budgetary law for 2000 was revised to make the HDI mandatory in focusing social programmes. Encouraged by that move, the state of Sao Paulo has produced a new index reflecting both human development and social responsibility. Having decided to institutionalize the index, the state legislative body intends to issue a decree making production of the index mandatory for city administrations.