

➔ EGYPT: GOVERNORATE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORTS PROVIDE ANALYSIS AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

In a Nutshell

In 1993, Egypt became one of the first countries to produce a national human development report (NHDR). The process cultivated statistical capacities relating to human development indexes and other socioeconomic indicators; indeed, it was only after the 1996 NHDR that poverty terminology came into use. Today, the government's Five-Year Plan (2002-2006) incorporates analysis and planning from the human development standpoint. Human development indexes were disaggregated at the municipal level in 2002, and efforts are underway to prepare regional human development reports with disaggregation to the village level.

Clearly, the NHDR has become a major human development advocacy tool in Egypt, while facilitating capacity development with respect to poverty analysis and development planning.

The Story

Since its first NHDR in 1993, Egypt has produced a report almost every year, in collaboration with the Institute of National Planning (INP) and the local UNDP office. In the process, new statistical capabilities have flourished within the INP and its mother institution, the Ministry of Planning. NHDR contributions to capacity development for poverty analysis and development planning include the creation in 1996 of a methodology for calculating a national poverty line, and the production of the first reliable estimates of poverty in the country, disaggregated by region.

The reports have been adopted unofficially by the government and are being used in ILO and World Bank poverty-related analyses. They also provided the baseline information for the projections in Egypt's first MDG report, prepared by the UN Country Team in 2002. The NHDRs' calculations of human development indexes at the regional or governorate level have been adopted by the Egyptian Social Fund for Development and other government local investment programmes, such as Shourok, as a method for earmarking resources.

By virtue of the visibility and quality of the reports, the then NHDR coordinator was appointed Minister of Planning in 2001. This has allowed him to continue the process of capacity development from within the government, where the concept and terminology of human development has become ever more apparent in processes, documents and events. The current Five-Year Plan, for instance, has incorporated human development analysis and planning, along with related targets and indicators. Through the parallel but coordinated work of the National

Council of Women and UNDP, gender sensitive budgeting has also appeared, while the progressive spread of human development concepts within the Ministry, and in the government more generally, opened the planning process to private-sector participation in 2002.

In recent years, the NHDR has become an even more influential document, retaining its quality without losing the autonomy and neutrality of its authors and content. In the 2003 report, following the disaggregation of human development indexes at the municipal level, a series of indicators was produced for each of 451 municipalities, and used by the UNDP office to devise an electronically searchable, map-centred geographic database.

The analysis of spatial development disparities has since prompted the Prime Minister to request that a programme be prepared, together with UNDP, for the dozens of municipalities that showed poor results. Because of its multidisciplinary nature and significant size, this initiative will promote coordination not only among UN agencies. It will also be one of the first actions envisaged in a National Poverty Reduction Action Plan that is being prepared by the Ministry of Planning with the support of the World Bank, UNDP and ILO.

The analytical and substantive capacities generated by the NHDRs have not remained confined to the INP or the Ministry of Planning. UNDP is now supporting, with co-financing from the Danish government, the preparation of governorate reports, led by the Ministry of Local Development. The first seven reports appeared in 2003, with preparations for the remaining 20 underway. These have pushed HDI disaggregation to Egypt's 4,500 villages. Their detailed analysis will allow not only precision in tackling local development issues and prioritizing investments by type and size, but also the opportunity to sustain a process of local participatory development planning and monitoring, which has been a feature of report preparation. At the same time, awareness has grown swiftly among local authorities, who have started to adopt human development concepts, measurements and terminology.

Results and Critical Factors

The availability of pertinent data at the village, municipal and governorate levels has guided advocacy on human development across Egypt, allowing the targeting of pressing priorities. At the same time, capacity development for poverty analysis and development planning at the national level is now spreading to the sub-national arena. Besides contributing to Egypt's five-year planning process, the NHDR database makes socioeconomic information available for the first time through maps and a query system, providing a vital planning tool for government departments and donors. Factors that account for the success of the NHDRs include the following:

- From the outset, a national institution, INP, was charged with the responsibility for coordinating the preparation of the reports, with UNDP providing a critical support role.
- A strong commitment on the part of the director of INP ensured that HDR policy analysis was woven into national systems and procedures, which also strengthened individual and organizational capacities.
- Opportunities have been deliberately created to draw on in-country expertise that supports the development of the NHDRs, and to encourage the broad-based participation of different sectors of society in the formulation and review process, including in selecting the theme, conducting research and carrying out peer reviews.

Further information

Egypt Human Development Report 2003

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