

Воронцова Т. В. - студентка 7МК - 2Б
факультету № 2 Національної академії
внутрішніх справ;

Консультант з англійської мови:
Камінська Н. В. - професор кафедри
гуманітарних та загально-правових
дисциплін факультету № 2
Національної академії внутрішніх
справ, доктор юридичних наук,
професор

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT - PART OF LAW SOCIETY

People are the real wealth of a nation. The basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. This may appear to be a simple truth. But it is often forgotten in the immediate concern with the accumulation of commodities and financial wealth.

Human development is a process of enlarging people's choices. In principle, these choice can be infinite and change over time. But at all levels of development, the three essential ones are for people to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. If these essential choices are not available, many other opportunities remain inaccessible. But human development does not end there. Additional choices, highly valued by many people, range from political, economic and social freedom to opportunities for being creative and productive, and enjoying personal self respect and guaranteed human rights.

Human development has two sides: the formation of human capabilities - such as improved health, knowledge and skills- and the use people make of their acquired capabilities - for leisure, productive purposes or being active in cultural, social and political affairs. If the scales of human development do not finely balance the two sides, considerable human frustration may result. According to this concept of human development, income is clearly only one option that people would like to have, albeit an important one. But it is not the sum total of their lives. Development must, therefore, be more than just the expansion of income and wealth. Its focus must be people.

Human development is incomplete without human freedom. Throughout history, people have been willing to sacrifice their lives to gain national and personal liberty. We have witnessed only recently an irresistible wave of human freedom sweep across Eastern Europe, South Africa and many other parts of the world. Any index of human development should therefore give adequate weight to a society's human freedom in pursuit of material and social goals.

The valuation we put on similar human development achievements in different countries will be quite different depending on whether they were accomplished in a democratic or an authoritarian framework. While the need for qualitative judgment is clear, there is no simple quantitative measure available yet to capture the many aspects of human freedom - free elections, multiparty political systems, uncensored press, adherence to the rule of law, guarantees of free speech and so on.

To some extent, however, the human development index (HDI) captures some aspects of human freedom. For example, if the suppression of people suppresses their creativity and productivity, that would show up in income estimates or literacy levels. In addition, the human development concept, focuses on people's capabilities or, in other words, people's strength to manage their affairs - which, after all, is the essence of freedom.

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