

**Data, Indicators and Indices:
The Oxymora of Measuring Development**

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Abstract

The issue of data quality, used to develop regional and international indicators and indices, has been the subject of a continuous debate. Several times the Governments of Arab States do not accept the results and information that regional and international organizations publish. This paper argues that while these discrepancies exist, still these indicators and indices provide direction for needed action, and Governments of Arab States have to exert more effort in validating and availing their information for a healthy discourse on plans for real sustainable human development.

Today, in response to one of the de facto imperatives of globalization, i.e., environmental crisis, sustainable development has evolved as a key concept for current and future development initiatives. At the crux of sustainable development is engaging stakeholders. One of the key concepts that evolved from this paradigm shift to sustainable development is sustainable human development, which rests on expanding people's choices and capabilities by forming social capital. The capacity of the people and institutions of the community as well as its ecological and geographical conditions determines to a large extent the ability of the community to adopt a sustainable development path. Capacity building involves various methods to link the individual and institutional components of development, and the framework in which a system operates as well.

The paper shows there are serious conceptual weaknesses in developing indices that measure development. Western economics tend to emphasize gross national product or aggregate wealth as indicators of national well-being; however, a more sentient measure of the usefulness and value of development is whether it expands real freedoms that people enjoy. Development both causes, and results, from transformations. If a country achieves economic growth without sacrificing both human dignity and self-esteem, then human development will follow, and the development is sustainable. The paper proposes a set of recommendations for improving the processes of information generation and sharing conducive for an informed decision-making process.