Human Development Challenges of a Metropolis: Mumbai

by M. H. Suryanarayana, Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Mumbai[1]

Mumbai, the capital city of the state of Maharashtra in India, is in fact the financial capital of India. With a population of 13.4 million (Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai, 2010), it is the most populous city in India. It is also the most prosperous city in India, with the highest levels of per capita income and consumption. It is one of the top 10 financial centres of the world.

Its commercial activity and prosperity has attracted migrants from all over the country. As a result, there are pockets of slums all over the city, including Dharavi, one of the largest and best-known slums in the world. Mumbai has four more slums which are larger than Dharavi.

Given the prosperity, market infrastructure and access to modern facilities, one would expect a population homogenous in terms of the different human development indicators, in terms of levels as well as spread. A moot question would be how prosperous is the city in terms of human development dimensions.

Information on relevant indicators of human development is not available; the limited available information on proxy indicators has its own limitations.

Thus, we draw radar charts/profiles of human development across wards in Mumbai in terms of the following indicators which have a bearing on the three major dimensions of human development:
- total literacy rate (2001);
- proportion of slum population (2001);
- proportion of marginal workers[2] (2001); and
- infant mortality rate (2006).

Total literacy rate is used as a measure for knowledge; relative shares of slum population and marginal workforce as surrogates for measures of deprivation in standard of living or income; and infant mortality rate to gauge the health status. Information on all these indicators is normalised according to the Human Development Index (HDI) rule with reference to the goalposts. The goalposts fixed for literacy rate, slum population (percentage) and marginal workers (percentage) are at their lower and upper bounds.

The last three of these four indicators are measures of deprivation. Since human development is a measure of achievement, these three indicators of deprivation are transformed into measures of achievement by taking their complements. Finally, their scale is changed to fall in the interval of 0–5 to facilitate a radar plot.

Figure 1: Mumbai Indicators of Human Development
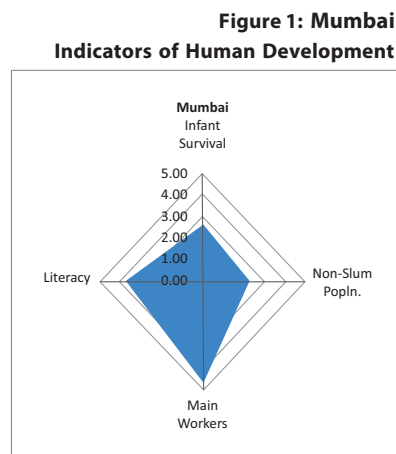
Their radar profiles bring out contrasting performances of wards by the four indicators considered. Finally, the aggregate profile for Mumbai as a whole presented in Figure 1 demonstrates the inadequate performance with respect to infant survival and non-slum population factors.

The box plot (Figure 2) shows quite clearly the uneven performance across wards on account of these two factors.

Figure 2: Mumbai Human Development Dimensions
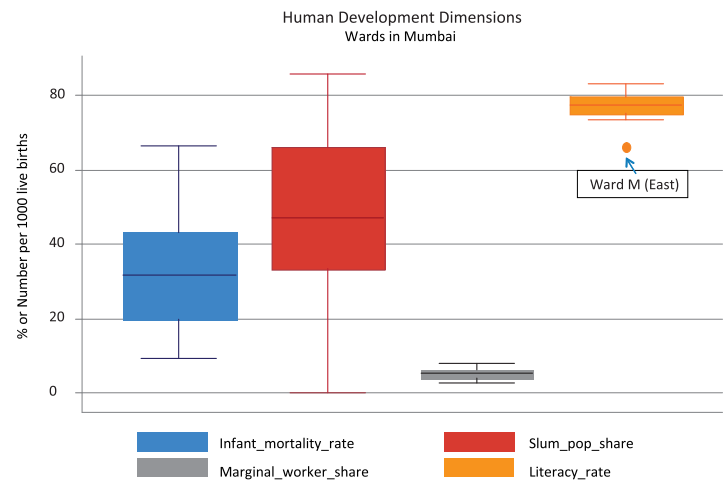
The messages which emerge from the analysis are as follows:
- Even within metropolitan Mumbai, there are wards performing quite poorly in terms of infant survival rate. This feature is also perceptible at the aggregate profile for Mumbai. This is one area which calls for serious policy attention and response.
- Another factor which accounts for inter-ward differentials in human development radar profiles is the share of non-slum population. Thus, habitation is another issue which has to be addressed on a priority basis.
- As regards educational achievement, though the spread across wards is relatively even, ward M (East) is not even in the mainstream and needs policy focus.
- The lack of sound information on all related indicators of human development is a constraint on situation review, policy choice and evaluation. Therefore, there is an urgent need to address this issue by improving or setting up a sound institutional capacity to monitor human development in Mumbai.

Reference:

Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (2010). *Mumbai Human Development Report 2009*. New Delhi, Oxford University Press.

Notes:

1. Thanks are due to Dr Sangita Kamdar for the information base.
2. A marginal worker is one who has worked for less than 180 days during the reference period.