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Q16

Why did human development fail to keep pace with economic development in India?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · GS I · 15 marks · World's Physical Geography

Salient features of world's physical geography.

Core demand of the question

- Why did human development fail to keep pace with economic development in India?
- Explain the gap; do not deny that some human indicators improved

Revision summary

Post-1991 growth raised GDP and cut some poverty without matching gains in health and learning.

Low **public health spend** and child stunting show the social gap.

Enrolment without learning and informal jobs limit capabilities.

Women's low paid work and regional caste gaps split the average.

GDP is not HDI; India grew richer faster than it grew healthier and better taught.

Flow diagram

Post-1991 GDP services -> Income and some poverty fall

Thin health spend weak learning -> HDI lag

Jobless informal gender gap -> HDI lag

Regional caste gaps -> HDI lag

Income and some poverty fall -> Post-1991 GDP services

HDI lag -> Human development behind

Conclusion

- Raise public health toward a round two-and-a-half to three percent of GDP and fund primary care, not only insurance bills.
- Tie school grants to actual learning, as **NEP 2020** asks, and expand creches so women can work.
- Use multidimensional poverty measures, not only GDP, in state ranking so the gap stays visible.

Economic development outpaced human development because growth did not buy enough public health, learning, and women's work. The way forward is to treat those as core infrastructure of growth, not as welfare after the fact.

Facts & figures

1991 liberalisation

Policy turn after which services and private investment lifted GDP growth above the older slow trend.

Public health spend

Long stayed near one to two percent of GDP, too low for universal primary care.

NFHS child stunting

About one-third of under-five children remain stunted in recent NFHS rounds, in round figures.

ASER learning gap

Rural surveys that show many enrolled children cannot read a basic paragraph or do simple arithmetic.

NEP 2020

Education policy that names foundational literacy as the missing piece of schooling-led human development.

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