SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX: DISTRICTS OF INDIA

MAKING SOCIAL PROGRESS MORE INTEGRAL TO THE INDIAN DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Institute for Competitiveness

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ABOUT INSTITUTE FOR COMPETITIVENESS, INDIA

Institute for Competitiveness, India is the Indian knot in the global network of the Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness at Harvard Business School. Institute for Competitiveness, India is an international initiative centered in India, dedicated to enlarging and purposeful disseminating of the body of research and knowledge on competition and strategy, as pioneered over the last 25 years by Professor Michael Porter of the Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness at Harvard Business School. Institute for Competitiveness, India conducts & supports indigenous research; offers academic & executive courses; provides advisory services to the Corporate & the Governments. The institute studies competition and its implications for company strategy; the competitiveness of nations, regions & cities and thus generate guidelines for businesses and those in governance; and suggests & provides solutions for socio-economic problems.

ABOUT SOCIAL PROGRESS IMPERATIVE

The Social Progress Imperative’s mission is to improve the lives of people around the world, particularly the least well off, by advancing global social progress by: providing a robust, holistic and innovative measurement tool—the Social Progress Index; fostering research and knowledge-sharing on social progress; and equipping leaders and change-makers in business, government and civil society with new tools to guide policies and programs. From the EU to India to Brazil and beyond, the Social Progress Imperative has catalyzed the formation of local action networks that bring together government, businesses, academia, and civil society organizations committed to using the Social Progress Index as a tool to transform societies and improve people’s lives.
SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX RESULTS

The Social Progress Index: Districts of India includes 637 districts from 33 states and Union Territories. The framework includes 50 distinct indicators, and it is the first ever effort to holistically and comprehensively assess the quality of life of India’s citizens on this level of granularity. By averaging the performance of all districts, we can identify the most pressing challenges as well as relative successes. Overall, India’s districts achieve an average score of 56.66 on the Social Progress Index. Breaking this down across dimensions and components, we find that there is considerable variation in the districts’ performance across different facets of social progress.

Exhibit 1: Overall performance of the districts

DISTRICTS THROUGH THE LENS OF SOCIAL PROGRESS

The Social Progress score of Indian districts lies between 28.67 and 76.80 on a scale of 0-100. These results highlight the immense scope for improvement for even the best performing districts. A closer analysis reveals significant challenges in the Central and Eastern region of the country comprising of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Odisha, and Jharkhand.
Social Progress Varies Considerably Within State Boundaries

Administrative boundaries define neither social progress, not economic development. Districts within a state do not perform uniformly well or uniformly less well, and there is significant variation. This implies that there is an immense pool of knowledge and best practices to be learned and shared within states, as well as beyond their borders.
ECONOMIC PROGRESS DOES NOT NECESSARILY TRANSLATE TO SOCIETAL PROGRESS

By separating the measurement of social performance from economic performance, the Social Progress Index makes it possible to examine the relationship between economic development and social progress. Understanding this relationship is also the next frontier in understanding economic development because societal constraints and deficits clearly retard economic development. (Porter, Stern, & Green, 2017)

Despite the overall positive association between economic performance and social progress, the variability of performance among districts with comparable levels of economic activity is considerable. The evidence supports the conclusion that economic measures cannot be the sole driving force of inclusive growth: it is important to focus on the social aspects as well.

Exhibit 4: Social Progress and Economic Development

THE PERFORMANCE OF DISTRICTS IS NOT NECESSARILY SIMILAR ON ALL FACETS OF SOCIAL PROGRESS

Similarly, a high ranked district does not necessarily perform well across all dimensions of progress and vice versa. Every district faces challenges and has room for improvement. For instance, Hyderabad is ranked among the top districts in the country, but this does not mean that its performance is among the best on all aspects of social progress.
Exhibit 5: Social Progress Scores of Hyderabad
THE NEED FOR A BETTER UNDERSTANDING AND MEASUREMENT

In 2014 Institute for Competitiveness, India joined hands with Social Progress Imperative to lay the foundation for their initiative Social Progress India. The objective was to provide the leaders, businesses, and changemakers in the country with an actionable tool to advance social progress for India’s citizens. It was conceived on the understanding that despite the economic progress that India has made during the last few years, quality of life of its citizens registered only slight enhancements. There are many who live without the benefits of public services; almost 30 percent of the rural population lack access to electricity; third of trials take more than three years to complete, and the list goes on. These facts indicate the pressing need for a measurement model that can better understand the needs of the society, while also equipping decision-makers with the necessary knowledge and tools to make social progress integral to how India perceives its way forward.

WHY SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX: DISTRICTS OF INDIA

Institute for Competitiveness, India along with Professor Michael E Porter and Michael Green launched the Social Progress Index: States of India at India’s National Competitiveness Forum 2017. Since then, the Index has generated enormous interest from policy makers, businesses and civil society alike, and has already contributed to more informed, evidence-based policies, decisions, and investments. It was however clear from the very beginning of the Social Progress India initiative that to properly and accurately assess the state of social progress of India’s citizens, we must strive for a more granular assessment. Building on the above knowledge Institute is now launching Social Progress Index: Districts of India.
The Social Progress Index focuses on what matters to societies and people by giving them the tools to understand better and seize opportunities and building blocks to enhance and sustain the quality of their lives, and create the conditions to reach their full potential.

FRAMEWORK OF THE INDEX

Guided by a group of academic and policy experts, the Social Progress Index follows a conceptual framework that defines social progress as well as its key elements. In this context, social progress is defined as the “capacity of a society to meet the basic human needs of its citizens, establish the building blocks that allow citizens and communities to enhance and sustain the quality of their lives, and create the conditions for all individuals to reach their full potential.”

The framework outlines three broad categories of social progress, referred to as dimensions, emerging from the above definition of social progress:

- Basic Human Needs;
- Foundations of Wellbeing; and
- Opportunity.

Each of these dimensions is further broken down into four underlying components (see Exhibit 6). The most important step in designing the index is to select the appropriate indicator set that represents the components under each dimension. Apart from the criterion that the data should be publicly available, principles of the index guide the choice of a relevant set of indicators. The set of unique design principles that allow an exclusive analysis of social progress and help the Index stand out from other indices are:

- including social and environmental indicators only;
- measuring outcomes, not inputs;
- relevant to all societies;
- an actionable tool to drive change.

The Social Progress Index: Districts of India includes 637 districts from 33 states and Union Territories. The framework consists 50 distinct indicators, and it is the first ever effort to holistically and comprehensively assess the quality of life of India’s citizens on this level of granularity.

The framework represents a pilot effort to assess the quality of life of India’s citizens. As such the framework can be a significant contribution to defining success beyond economic achievements and
can serve as a tool for policy-makers to align regional development and strategic planning, to monitor progress and evaluate the success of policies. The framework can also serve as a mapping dashboard of public expenditures, civil society engagement, and private sector investment.

Social Progress Index: Districts of India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Human Needs</th>
<th>Foundations of Wellbeing</th>
<th>Opportunity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition and Basic Medical Care</td>
<td>Access to Basic Knowledge</td>
<td>Personal Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antenatal Care</td>
<td>Literate Women</td>
<td>Children whose birth was registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underweight Children</td>
<td>Literate Men</td>
<td>Access to Judiciary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anaemic Children</td>
<td>Girls Schooling</td>
<td>Land Ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stunted Children</td>
<td>Primary Net Enrolment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anaemia</td>
<td>Dropout Rates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malnutrition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water and Sanitation</td>
<td>Access to Info and Communications</td>
<td>Personal Freedom and Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanitation Facilities</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Early Marriages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathing facilities</td>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>Young Mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved Sanitation</td>
<td>Landline</td>
<td>Family Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking water</td>
<td>Mobile</td>
<td>Kidnapping to Compel for Marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water from treated source</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter</td>
<td>Health and Wellness</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houses in good condition</td>
<td>High Sugar</td>
<td>Women Inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing facilities</td>
<td>High Blood Pressure</td>
<td>Children Crimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>Obesity</td>
<td>SC/STs Inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal safety</td>
<td>Women's Cancer</td>
<td>Access to Advanced Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder Crimes</td>
<td>Oral Cancer</td>
<td>Women Schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape Crimes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Access to Colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road Deaths</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female to Male Enrolment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other IPC Crimes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Colleges Connected to NEICT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exhibit 6: Social Progress Index Framework

Detailed methodology is presented at Methodology Report, Social Progress Index: Districts of India, available on the Social Progress Index India website.

3 While the Social Progress Index: Districts of India adopts the same framework as the Global Social Progress Index, there is a slight difference in the name of the Tolerance and Inclusion component. The Social Progress Index: Districts of India only uses the term Inclusion as it is more contextualized to local circumstances. However, the conceptual basis of the component, i.e. the underlying question, whether “no one is excluded from the opportunity to be a contributing member of society?” remains the same.
SOCIAL PROGRESS VARIES CONSIDERABLY ACROSS DIFFERENT FACETS

By averaging the performance of all districts, we can identify the most pressing challenges as well as relative successes. Overall, India's district achieves an average score of 56.66 on the Social Progress Index. Breaking this down across dimensions and components, we find that there is considerable variation in the districts' performance across different facets of social progress (Exhibit 7). At the dimension level, the districts score highest at 60.51 on Basic Human Needs, followed by 55.54 on Foundations of Wellbeing, and lowest at 54.94 on Opportunity. These results are consistent with the India level scores calculated in the state level index. District perform well on Access to Basic Knowledge, but performance on Access to Information and Communications as well as Advanced Education is lagging relative to other aspects of social progress.

And while the performance of all districts cannot be simply averaged, and this analysis, therefore, needs to be considered with caution, it offers an indicative assessment of the overall quality of lives and the most challenging issues India’s citizens face.

Exhibit 7: Overall Performance
The Basic Human Needs dimension appraises whether or not a region can provide its citizens with the basic needs for survival. The analysis reveals that these needs are still unmet in many parts of the country. A closer look at the four components – Nutrition & Basic Medical Care, Shelter, Water & Sanitation, and Personal Safety – reveals that three of them score above the average, while Water & Sanitation seems to be lagging. Personal Safety seems to be another issue that needs immediate attention.

The Foundations of Wellbeing dimension captures whether the citizens are able to obtain basic education; enjoy a long and healthy life, have access to information and can communicate freely, and are able to enjoy a clean environment. Among these four components – the scores are lowest in Access to Information & Communications, whereas the districts perform best on Access to Basic Knowledge. This reflects important achievements in an area that has been the focus of the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the Indian Government.

Opportunity encompasses Personal Rights, Personal Freedom and Choice, Inclusion, and Access to Advanced Education. The lowest performing aspect is Access to Advanced Education. This possibly reflects immense challenges faced by advanced education system and institutions in India. The gross enrolment ratio in higher education is not only less than that of developed economies (with the exception of the USA) but also of some developing economies like China. The best performance in the dimension is achieved in securing the rights and personal freedom of citizens.

**EVERY DISTRICT HAS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT**

India’s districts’ scores range from a high of 76.8 to a low of 28.67. The results show that there are considerable differences between districts, and there are clearly some underperforming outliers. Given the range of scores, there is immense scope for improvement for even the best-performing districts.
A more detailed analysis of the components of the Social Progress Index reveals that districts perform rather uniformly on two components - Nutrition & Basic Medical Care and Access to Basic Knowledge. The scores for Nutrition & Basic Medical Care lie between the range of 45 and 70, while for Access to Basic Knowledge scores range from 55 to 80. The districts’ scores for the other 10 components have a much higher variation. This implies that there are clear over-performing and under-performing districts. The former can serve as a benchmark to the latter to help inspire, replicate and drive improvements in the social wellbeing.

The districts can be grouped into the following four tiers, on the basis of median and quartile scores (see Table 1):

- Very High Social Progress,
- High Social Progress,
- Middle Social Progress and
- Low Social Progress

**Table 1: Tiers of social progress**
**PERFORMANCE OF TIERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier</th>
<th>Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very High Social Progress</td>
<td>Above 61.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Social Progress</td>
<td>Equal to 61.48 and more than 54.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Social Progress</td>
<td>Equal to 54.54 and more than 46.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Social Progress</td>
<td>Less than or equal to 46.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors

**Table 2: Performance of Tiers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Social Progress Index</th>
<th>Basic Human Needs</th>
<th>Foundations of Wellbeing</th>
<th>Opportunity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very High Social Progress</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Social Progress</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Social Progress</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Social Progress</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Very High Social Progress**
A total of 159 districts register strong performance on social progress. The overall scores of the Very High Social Progress districts are clustered around 65. The average score of the group is better in Basic Human Needs and Opportunity as compared to Foundations of Wellbeing. The results of Foundations of Wellbeing are driven down by Health & Wellness. The component looks at lifestyle diseases such as blood pressure, obesity, etc.

**High Social Progress**
Again, 159 districts form this tier, where the overall scores are lower by 7 points than the “Very High Social Progress” tier. The highest difference is observed in the third dimension - Opportunity. This reflects that there are significant differences in the opportunities available to citizens across districts.

**Middle Social Progress**
The tier is formed by 159 districts that belong to all state categories - “Very High Social Progress,” “High Social Progress,” “Middle Social Progress” and “Low Social Progress” states. Their average score is 8 points lower than the “High Social Progress” tier.

Exhibit 10 depicts the share of state’s districts belonging to the Middle performance tier. As evident, majority of Meghalaya's districts perform in this tier. Several districts from states, which based on the
Social Progress Index: States of India fall into the Very High and High Social Progress tiers (highlighted in orange) also belong to the Middle performance tier. These results imply that social progress varies within states and therefore there is a need to have policies that are focused towards regional issues.

Exhibit 10: Middle Social Progress

**Low Social Progress**
This tier is formed mainly by the districts of Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Assam, and Odisha. The average scores are lower by 9 points from the above tier.

Exhibit 11: Average Performance of Low Social Progress Tier
NITI Aayog developed an analysis of backward districts based on indicators across five sectors of health, education, nutrition, agricultural and water resources with the aim assisting the regions to transform and improve.

The graph below looks at the social progress performance of these districts. A significant variation is observed - the social progress scores range between 33 and 68. Out of the 111 districts analysed, the scores of 77 districts are below 50.

Exhibit 12: Social Progress of Backward Districts

The Social Progress Index offers a well suited rapid-assessment approach that can help to track the performance of these districts. Therefore, it can be a powerful tool for the government to manage progress.
The limitation of economic growth to transform the lives of people around the world is gaining more and more attention. Still, sufficient evidence exists to present the positive side of the economic story as well. There are countries where economic growth has helped the government to invest more and more in advancing the living standards of its citizens. For instance, Norway, a country with high levels of per capita income, has also managed to provide its citizens with the better social ecosystem. However, the Social Progress Index also demonstrates that economic growth is not the whole story and cannot be the ultimate goal. For any level of economic performance, there are countries that perform better or worse than others.

Exhibit 13: Social Progress and Economic Development

One of the primary objectives of the Social Progress Index: States of India was to provide an understanding of the relationship between social and economic performance. It allowed, for the first time, an analysis of the relationship between social progress and measures of economic success at the regional level in India. By measuring social progress independently of economic indicators, it provided empirical evidence of the relationship of the two and helped in understanding whether (or not) economic performance was being transformed into social progress.

Again, going by the same objective, the Social Progress Index: Districts of India aims to unpack the relationship between social and economic development. Exhibit 13 plots the Social Progress Rank of the districts against their Economic Density Rank. We use the Economic Density measure developed by World Bank in “Economic Potential of Indian Districts”. It looks at GDP per square kms.

Exhibit 13 shows that economic performance is not the whole story and should not be the ultimate goal. While there is a relationship between economic development and social progress, the relationship is not a direct one. For any level of economic development, there are districts performing better and districts performing worse on social progress. The evidence supports the conclusion that economic measures cannot be the sole driving force of inclusive growth: it is important to focus on the social aspects as well.
The Index represents the first comprehensive framework for measuring social progress that is independent of economic performance. As a complement to traditional measures of economic performance, such as income, the Social Progress Index provides a better understanding of the relationship between economic gain and social progress. In contrast, other indices such as the Human Development Index combine economic and social indicators. Our objective is to utilize a clear yet rigorous methodology that isolates the non-economic dimensions of social performance.

The Index offers a systematic, empirical foundation for governments, businesses, civil society and communities to prioritise social and environmental issues, and benchmark performance against other countries, regions, cities, and communities to inform and drive public policies, investments, and business and community decisions.

The Social Progress Index: Districts of India offers a unique and revealing picture of India’s districts’ societal performance that is independent of traditional economic measures. A district’s level of social progress is the result of cumulative incremental choices its governments, communities, citizens, and businesses make about how to invest limited resources and work together to address the most pressing needs and challenges.

Districts at all levels of development can use this data to assess their performance and set priorities for improvement. Most districts will be able to identify areas of relative strength, which represent social progress foundations upon which they can build. However, every district exhibit area for improvement and the Social Progress Index allows a strategic approach to social development that identifies areas for prioritization and investment.

While the index provides invaluable new insights into the performance of India’s society, intrinsically, it cannot be considered the be-all end-all. The Index should be approached as a discussion starter, one that is essential to address India’s most pressing challenges, one that is not perfect and will benefit from constructive feedback from scholars and policymakers alike. The Institute for Competitiveness, India invites all interested parties to use the Social Progress Index data and results to conduct research and exploration, and to build a new repository of expertise and knowledge which will help to advance social progress in India and elsewhere.