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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A NOTE ON SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

A Note on Social Progress Index in India Abstract: Social progress has become an increasingly critical agenda for leaders in government, business, and civil society. The demand for better lives and greater equality is evident across the world as we see protests and new political movements for racial equity, women's rights, climate change, gun violence and beyond. As the Covid-19 pandemic swept the world it highlighted our structural weaknesses and our inequities. There has been a growing expectation that it is not just governments who need to play a role in delivering improvements, but that business is also accountable, and must deliver improvements in the lives of people, as well as protecting the environment for us all. This is the social progress imperative. Progress on social issues does not automatically accompany economic development. Rising income usually brings major improvements in areas such as access to clean water, sanitation, literacy, and basic education. But on average, personal security is no better in middle-income countries than in low-income ones and is often worse. And too many people—regardless of income—live without full rights and experience discrimination or even violence based on gender, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Traditional measures of national income, such as GDP per capita, fail to capture the overall progress of societies. In this connection, an attempt is made in this paper to examine the levels of social progress in India.

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INTRODUCTION

Generally the social sector is defined as dealing with social and economic activities carried out for the purposes of benefiting society, and in the main nonprofit, not-for-profit, philanthropic and mission based and nongovernmental organizations are associated with this sector. It means all development and welfare activities and includes inter alia, health, education, water supply, transport, agriculture and allied activities, infrastructure, irrigation, management of natural resources such as water, forest, land, energy, welfare schemes and services, etc. provided by government and non-government entities. Broadly, five sectors, namely, education, health, social welfare, sports and culture, and labour and manpower are considered under the Social sector. However, in most of the studies, focus will be on education and health, as these are two major components and have wider positive externalities for other sectors of the economy and society as a whole. They help increase the overall expansion of the economy by enhancing productivity and output, and may be funded by private or public agencies. Indian plan documents also discuss health and education under the social sector, expressing a lot of concern. Social progress has become an increasingly critical agenda for leaders in government, business, and civil society. The demand for better lives and greater equality is evident across the world as we see protests and new political movements for racial equity, women's rights, climate change, gun violence and beyond. As the Covid-19 pandemic swept the world it highlighted our structural weaknesses and our inequities.

There has been a growing expectation that it is not just governments who need to play a role in delivering improvements, but that business is also accountable, and must deliver improvements in the lives of people, as well as protecting the environment for us all. This is the social progress imperative. Progress on social issues does not automatically accompany economic development. Rising income usually brings major improvements in areas such as access to clean water, sanitation, literacy, and basic education. But on average, personal security is no better in middle-income countries than in low-income ones and is often worse. And too many people—regardless of income—live without full rights and experience discrimination or even violence based on gender, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Traditional measures of national income, such as GDP per capita, fail to capture the overall progress of societies. In this connection, an attempt is made in this paper to examine the levels of social progress in India.

Social Progress Index (SPI): The Social Progress Index by separating the measurement of social progress from economic development also helps in providing an empirical relationship between the two concepts and hence offers citizens a better picture of how their country is developing. It helps in informing our understanding of how economic development drives social progress and vice versa, an area that is being debated for long. A better understanding of this relationship can help policymakers make strategic choices that can lead to inclusive growth. There is a pressing need for a measurement model to understand the needs of the society better while also equipping decision-makers with the necessary knowledge and tools to make social progress integral to how India

perceives its way forward. The need to leverage the sizable population in the country is extensively discussed. But to convert humans to human capital in the true sense of the term, improving people's lives holistically and sustainably is the key. It is a broad goal to capture what society lacks and hinders its people from living an improved life and fulfilling their potential. The SPI provides a "comprehensive measure of social progress based" on social and environmental indicators that can complement the Gross domestic product (GDP) as a measure of well-being. So, the SPI is the first holistic tool that is designed to measure social progress independent of GDP. SPI is a tool that can serve as a holistic measure of a country's social progress at the national and sub-national levels. SPI is a comprehensive tool that can serve as a holistic measure of a country's social progress at the national and sub-national levels. The index assesses states and districts based on 12 components across three critical dimensions of social progress - Basic Human Needs, Foundations of Wellbeing, and Opportunity. The index uses an extensive framework comprising 89 indicators at the state level and 49 at the district level.

- **Basic Human Needs** assess the performance of states and districts in terms of Nutrition and Basic Medical Care, Water and Sanitation, Personal Safety and Shelter.
- **Foundations of Wellbeing** evaluates the progress made by the country across the components of Access to Basic Knowledge, Access to Information and Communication, Health and Wellness, and Environmental Quality.
- **Opportunity** focuses on Personal Rights, Personal Freedom and Choice, Inclusiveness, and Access to Advanced Education.

A foundation of Wellbeing evaluates the progress made by the country across the components of Access to Basic Knowledge, Access to Information and Communication, Health and Wellness, and Environmental Quality. Opportunity focuses on Personal Rights, Personal Freedom and Choice, Inclusiveness, and Access to Advanced Education. Recently, the Economic Advisory Council to Prime Minister (EAC-PM) along with Institute for Competitiveness and Social Progress Imperative released the Social Progress Index (SPI) for States and Districts of India as mandated by the EAC-PM. The Institute for Competitiveness released the annual 2022 Social Progress Index (SPI) which was published by Social Progress Imperative.

Social progress – The Global Scenario: The 2022 Social Progress Index ranks 169 countries on social progress. They combined 60 social and environmental outcome indicators to calculate an overall score for these countries, based on tiered levels of scoring that include measures in health, safety, education, technology, rights, and more. They also considered the data of 27 additional countries, calculating component and dimension scores when enough data are available. In all, the Social Progress Index measures at least some aspects of social progress across more than 99.97% of the world's population. While there is a clear correlation between the level of economic development and social progress, the relationship varies significantly. A country's income group often does not correspond to its level of social progress, especially in middle- and lower-income countries. We group countries from highest to lowest social progress into six tiers from Tier 1 to Tier 6. The index is topped by Norway with a score of 90.74 in Tier-1 countries i.e. high income countries. Among Tier 2 countries, Spain topped with a score of 85.35, and global rank of 21st. Among Tier 3 countries, Russia topped with a score of 71.99, and global rank of 59th. In Tier 4, Ghana is on top with a score of 64.80 at 98th while Tier 5 is topped by Côte d'Ivoire with 54.01, and 127th rank; and Tier 6 Niger tops at 159th global rank with a score of 43.14.

The Social Progress Index, based exclusively on indicators of social and environmental outcomes, offers a revealing picture of the levels of development in different countries that is independent of traditional economic measures. Countries achieve very different overall levels of social progress and widely differing patterns of social progress by dimensions and components.

The index reveals that high-income countries tend to achieve higher social progress than low-income countries.

SPI – The Indian Scenario: The Social Progress Index 2022 report shows that India is currently ranked 110th (among 169 countries) in the world on the Social Progress Index, scoring 60.19/100, in the fourth tier of performance. The country's aggregate Social Progress Index score in 2022 is slightly lower than the world average of 65.24. Since 2011 India has improved its score by 8.49 points, the third greatest improvement. This also compares favorably to global performance. In the period 2011-22 we observe that the world Social Progress Index score, covering 169 countries and weighted by population size, has improved from 59.84 in 2011 to 65.24 in 2022. This gain of 5.40 points is significant but is not fast enough to hit Sustainable Development Goals targets until the end of this century or early next. India's rate of improvement has, however, slowed over this period. This reflects a wider global trend - For the world as a whole, the rate of progress between 2017-22 is nearly half of the rate between 2011-17. To understand what this means for India we need to break the results down to the 12 components of the Social Progress Index.

Like many countries India's biggest gains, by 37.79 points, have been in Access to Information and Communication. Mobile phone subscriptions have almost doubled since 2011 to more than 80 subscriptions per head of population. In 2011, just 5.1% of the population had access to the internet; now it is 43%. Alongside this, access to online government services has soared. These gains are offset somewhat by a decline in access to diverse forms of information. There has also been a slowdown in the rate of progress in Access to Information. This reflects a wider global trend - the boom in access to mobile phones has delivered substantial gains in this aspect of social progress but, as we approach saturation, these gains are slowing down. The next biggest gains have been in Shelter, by 20.99 points. Since 2011 the use of clean fuels in households has doubled, rising from 32.4% to 64.2% of the population. As a result, the health impact of indoor air pollution has declined significantly. The switch to cleaner fuels is supported by expanded access to electricity from 75% to 99% of the population. India has also seen a decline in dissatisfaction with the affordability of housing. Most of the Union territories including Puducherry, Lakshadweep, Chandigarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, and Andaman and Nicobar Islands have ranked higher on India's Social Progress Index 2022 list. While Puducherry topped the chart, Jharkhand and Bihar ranked the lowest on the list. Jammu and Kashmir took a major step up, bagging the tenth spot.

SPI - State-wise Scenario: The EAC-PM used 89 indicators to assess the progress of each state. These indicators were included under categories – Nutrition and Basic Medical Care, Access to Basic Knowledge, Personal Rights Water and Sanitation, Access to Information & Communication, Personal Freedom & Choice, Shelter, Health & Wellness, Access to advanced Education, Personal Safety, and Environmental Quality. The states and union territories (UTs) have been categorised into six tiers. Here's what the six tiers mean and which states fall under those tiers:

Tier 1: Very High social progress: Based on the SPI scores, states and districts have been ranked under six tiers of social progress. The tiers are Tier 1: Very High Social Progress; Tier 2: High Social Progress; Tier 3: Upper Middle Social Progress; Tier 4: Lower Middle Social Progress; Tier 5: Low Social Progress; and Tier 6: Very Low Social Progress. The very High Social Progress states the states and UTs performed "remarkably well" across components like Water and Sanitation, Shelter, Personal Safety, Personal Freedom, and Choice, consequently scoring well across the dimension of Basic Human Needs. The states can work on strengthening the dimension of the Foundations of Wellbeing. Under Very High Social Progress category there are 9 states of India. In case of Tier-II category there are 06 states and UTs followed by 05 states and UTs Under Upper Middle social progress category. Most of the states and UTs of India are found under Tier-IV i.e Lower Middle Social Progress category. It

is glaring to note that the states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Telangana, Haryana etc which are economically strong states stood under this category. U.P., Odisha and Madhya Pradesh found at Lower Social Progress category and the 03 states Assam, Bihar and Jharkhand ranked under Tier-VI, Very Low Social Progress category. The head-wise analysis proves that, Puducherry has the highest SPI score of 65.99 in the country, attributable to its remarkable performance across components like Personal Freedom and Choice, Shelter, and Water and Sanitation. Lakshadweep and Goa closely follow it with scores of 65.89 and 65.53, respectively. Jharkhand and Bihar scored the lowest, 43.95 and 44.47, respectively. For the dimension of Basic Human Needs, Goa, Puducherry, Lakshadweep, and Chandigarh are the top four states with the best performance in Water and Sanitation and Shelter as compared to the other states and union territories. In addition, Goa has the highest component score for Water and Sanitation, followed by Kerala, scoring the highest across the Nutrition and Basic Medical Care component. For Shelter and Personal Safety, Chandigarh and Nagaland have emerged as the front-runners, respectively.

Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, and Goa have emerged as the best-performing States for the Foundations of Wellbeing. Within the dimension for the Access to Basic Knowledge component, Punjab has the highest component score of 62.92, while Delhi has topped the list for Access to Information and Communication with a score of 71.30. For Health and Wellness, Rajasthan has the highest component score of 73.74. For Environmental Quality, the top three states belong to the northeast region, namely, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Meghalaya. Lastly, Tamil Nadu has achieved the highest component score of 72.00 for the Opportunity dimension. Within this dimension, Andaman and Nicobar Islands have the highest component score for Personal Rights, while Sikkim has topped the list for Inclusiveness. It is commendable to witness Puducherry attaining the highest scores across two components in this dimension, i.e., Personal Freedom and Choice and Access to Advanced Education.

Tier-I. Very High Social Progress

State	SPI	Rank
Puducherry	65.99	1
Lakshadweep	65.89	2
Goa	65.53	3
Sikkim	65.10	4
Mizoram	64.19	5
Tamil Nadu	63.33	6
Himachal Pradesh	63.28	7
Chandigarh	62.37	8
Kerala	62.05	9

Tier II. High Social Progress

State	SPI	Rank
Jammu and Kashmir	60.76	10
Punjab	60.23	11
Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	59.81	12
Ladakh	59.53	13
Nagaland	59.24	14
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	58.76	15

Tier III. Upper Middle Social Progress

State	SPI	Rank
Uttarakhand	58.26	16
Karnataka	56.77	17
Arunachal Pradesh	56.56	18
Delhi	56.28	19
Manipur	56.27	20

By evaluating change in the performance of some key indicators since 2015-16, the report presents a broad picture of the social progress in India. In addition, the report highlights progress made by the 112 aspirational districts in the country, helping them track their social progress journey and understand the areas that require more attention. The findings in the report are based on a robust methodology and in-depth research and analysis, paving the way for policymakers to take informed decisions in the years to come.

Tier IV. Lower Middle Social Progress

State	SPI	Rank
Haryana	54.15	21
Gujarat	53.81	22
Andhra Pradesh	53.60	23
Meghalaya	53.22	24
West Bengal	53.13	25
Telangana	52.11	26
Tripura	51.70	27
Chhattisgarh	51.36	28
Maharashtra	50.86	29
Rajasthan	50.69	30

Tier V. Low Social Progress

State	SPI	Rank
Uttar Pradesh	49.16	31
Odisha	48.19	32
Madhya Pradesh	48.11	33

Tier VI. Very Low Social Progress

State	SPI	Rank
Assam	44.92	34
Bihar	44.47	35
Jharkhand	43.95	36

It also marks the start of the next phase in the social progress journey and hopes to advance the cause of social progress in the country. With respect District wise top rankings, the district, Aizawl (Mizoram) attained the highest SPI score of 72.90 in the country, with five more districts of Mizoram belonging to this tier, namely Lungei (69.80), Champhai (67.93), Serchhip (67.77), Saiha (65.79) and Mamit (64.84). Over 69 percent of Uttarakhand's districts witnessed Very High Social Progress, whereas 30 percent of Arunachal Pradesh's districts fall into this category. Nagpur is the only district in Maharashtra that has achieved Very High Social Progress.

CONCLUSION

The Social Progress Index, based exclusively on indicators of social and environmental outcomes, offers a revealing picture of the levels of development in different countries that is independent of traditional economic measures. Countries achieve very different overall levels of social progress and widely differing patterns of social progress by dimensions and components. The index reveals that high-income countries tend to achieve higher social progress than low-income countries. Yet this relationship is neither simple nor linear. While there is a clear correlation between the level of economic development and social progress, the relationship varies significantly. A country's income group often does not correspond to its level of social progress, especially in middle- and lower-income countries. Countries at all levels of development can use this data to assess their performance and set priorities for improvement. The Social Progress Index allows a strategic approach to social development that identifies areas for prioritization and investment. India's Social Progress Index scorecard shows that it is performing within the expected range for its level of GDP per capita (\$6,675 PPP). This is a good result because we observe that it is usually only smaller countries that are able to over-perform by this measure. India also shows two components that are better than its peers: Access to Information and Communication, and Access to Advanced Education. The one area of weakness is in Environmental Quality, where India ranks 168th in the world. This suggests that it is an aspect of social progress that should be a priority for attention. All other components are within the expected range. However, these country-level insights are not sufficient to devise a plan of action as the conditions vary significantly within the country. The purpose of launching this initiative at the State and District Level is to examine the ease of life of citizens at the grassroots level. It goes beyond the conventional assessment of progress through a country's GDP growth.

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