

Human Well-Being Research and Policy Making

Series Editors: Richard J. Estes · M. Joseph Sirgy

Vijay Kumar Shrotryia

Human Well-Being and Policy in South Asia

 Springer

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Series Editors

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*For my parents
Sri B. P. Shrotryia (late)
and Smt. Sharda Devi*

Preface

Bhutan has played a key role in introducing the concept of happiness and well-being to me and to the world as well. I worked there between 1993 and 2002 and developed an academic interest in the study of quality of life, happiness and well-being. The emphasis on policies towards improving quality of life and well-being through the focus on Gross National Happiness rather than gross domestic product has been a pivotal development. It has been able to generate academic interest among social scientists and policymakers. Bhutan is one of the smallest countries in South Asia, containing less than a million people in total population. Though it is one of the least developed nations across globe, its primary focus has not been to develop economically; rather it has been to prioritize happiness over income. This development philosophy has made Bhutan unique and noble.

Generally, human beings aspire to be happy. State policy works to facilitate this human aspiration. The policies are crafted to create, maintain and harness those conditions which are conducive to assure human well-being. The previous century witnessed significant transformations with respect to the development of physical infrastructure amid geopolitical changes, turmoil and adjustments. New economic systems to measure social and human progress were introduced which gained universal acceptance by development institutions and the developed nations of the world. However, overemphasis on economic policies and growth, leading towards increase in income, did not positively translate in improving human well-being vis-à-vis human happiness. The same is true of South Asia. South Asia has eight sovereign countries, each with diversities in religion, language and culture. It is the most populous and the most densely populated region in the world and possesses rich resources with potential to become one of the most vibrant economic regions of the world in general. This book is designed to shift policy focus towards improving the general well-being of people in this region.

A couple of years ago, I had written a chapter titled “History of Well-Being in South Asia” (co-author Krishna Mazumdar) for *The Pursuit of Human Well-Being—The Untold Global History*, edited by Professor Richard J. Estes and Professor M. Joseph Sirgy. While preparing that chapter, we realized that it could be expanded

into a book of this kind. The motivation, guidance and academic mentoring by both of the editors culminated into this book. This book is organized around policies in all the eight South Asian countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka), specifically focusing on policy relating to education, health, governance and economic development. It discusses vulnerabilities related to these broad themes with the support of data published by the World Bank and other agencies. It then identifies and compares the indicators related to these domains in order to make appropriate recommendations.

This book is divided into five chapters, which include the “An Introduction to Human Well-Being, Policy and South Asia Region”, “Human Well-Being Indicators in South Asia Region”, “Major Policy Interventions for Human Well-Being in South Asia”, “Human Well-Being Policy and Discussion” and “Conclusion and the Way Forward”. I have incorporated a brief discussion on Bhutan’s journey to adopt the Gross National Happiness metric in order to provide background information, practical aspects and outcome as obtained from the published reports and statistics, and have discussed the contributions made by some pathbreakers (Mohd. Yunus from Bangladesh, Mehbub Ul Haque and Malala Yousafzai from Pakistan, and Kailash Satyarthi from India) from the region in the recent past wherever relevant. The book concludes with a summary of the outcomes and a note on building a case for considering human well-being as a future policy focus apart from GDP. It outlines expected policy interventions and finally provides a summary of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of each of the countries in the region.

It is my hope that this book will help scholars gain a better understanding and perspective of the region and will guide policymakers towards appropriate policy frameworks for each of these countries, leading towards improved quality of life, vis-à-vis human well-being. I also hope that the information provided will help the reader articulate an alternative to GDP-driven policies and help reduce the class gap through a sustainable policy framework.

Delhi, India

Vijay Kumar Shrotryia

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Abbreviations

AFG	Afghanistan
ALR	Adult Literacy Rate
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
AYUSH	Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy
BAN	Bangladesh
BHU	Bhutan
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CIAA	Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DNT	Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa
DPT	Druk Phuensum Tshogpa
EAS	East Asia and Pacific
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ECS	Europe and Central Asia
EFA	Education For All
EMU	Euro Area
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FYP	Five-Year Plans
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFHR	Global Forum for Health Research
GNH	Gross National Happiness
GNHC	Gross National Happiness Commission
GST	Goods and Services Tax
GWP	Gallup World Poll
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
HPI	Happy Planet Index
HWB	Human Well-Being
ICT	Information and Computer Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization

IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
INR	Indian Rupee
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
KRA	Key Result Area
LCN	Latin America and Caribbean
LLC	Limited Liability Companies
MAL	The Maldives
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
MNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NCP	Nepali Congress Party
NEF	New Economics Foundation
NEP	Nepal
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHM	National Health Mission
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NPI	National Prosperity Index
NRHM	National Rural Health Mission
NUHM	National Urban Health Mission
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPHI	Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative
PAK	Pakistan
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PURA	Providing Urban amenities in Rural Areas
QOL	Quality of Life
RGOB	Royal Government of Bhutan
RTE	Right to Education
RTI	Right to Information
RUSA	Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan
SA	South Asia
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAFTA	South Asia Free Trade Agreement
SAPTA	South Asia Preferential Trade Agreement
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEHAT	System Enhancement for Health Action in Transition
SEN	Special Education Needs
SLK	Sri Lanka
SLTHP	Second Long-Term Health Plan
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
SSF	Sub-Saharan Africa
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
SWB	Subjective Well-Being
TT2	Tetanus Toxoid

UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WDH	World Database of Happiness
WHO	World Health Organization
WHR	World Happiness Report
WTO	World Trade Organization
WVS	World Values Survey

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