



Collegedunia NCERT Solutions

Step-by-step solutions, alternate methods & exam tips for Class 12 Geography

Chapter 3: Human Development

About this Chapter

Chapter 3 explains **human development**: not just growth of an economy, but expanding the choices people have to live long, healthy and dignified lives. You will meet the four pillars (equity, sustainability, productivity, empowerment) and the UNDP's **Human Development Index** that ranks countries.

Topics covered: Growth vs Development • Mahbub-ul-Haq & Amartya Sen • Three Basic Areas (Health, Knowledge, Living Standard) • Four Pillars (Equity, Sustainability, Productivity, Empowerment) • Human Development Index • Country Classification

Also see for this chapter: [Revision Notes](#)

Exercises

Q 3.1 Choose the right answer from the four alternatives given below.

(i) Which one of the following best describes development?

(a) an increase in size (b) a constant in size (c) a positive change in quality (d) a simple change in the quality.

(ii) Which one of the following scholars introduced the concept of Human Development?

(a) Prof. Amartya Sen (b) Ellen C. Semple (c) Dr Mahabub-ul-Haq (d) Ratzel.

SOLUTION

Concept used. **Growth** is a quantitative, value-neutral change in size (can be positive or negative). **Development** is a qualitative, value-positive change, it improves the quality

of life. The **Human Development Index** (HDI) was introduced by Pakistani economist Dr Mahbub-ul-Haq in 1990; Amartya Sen built the capability approach behind it, but the concept and the HDI are credited to Mahbub-ul-Haq.

- **(i) Answer: (c) a positive change in quality.** Growth is a change in size, so options (a) and (b) describe growth, not development. Option (d) talks about quality but misses the positive sign, which is essential. Only option (c) captures both pieces: quality *and* positive.
- **(ii) Answer: (c) Dr Mahabub-ul-Haq.** Ratzel defined human geography; Ellen Semple wrote on the changing relationship between man and Earth; Amartya Sen contributed the capability approach. The person who explicitly introduced the *concept* of human development (and the HDI) was **Dr Mahbub-ul-Haq**, who led the first UNDP Human Development Report in 1990.

The growth-development line

“A city’s population growing from one lakh to two lakhs is growth. The same city building schools, hospitals and clean water so its people live longer and happier lives is development.” That single example from the chapter settles every growth-vs-development question.

Final Answer: (i) (c) a positive change in quality; (ii) (c) Dr Mahabub-ul-Haq.

Exam Tip

Remember the pair: Mahbub-ul-Haq introduced the *concept and the HDI*; Amartya Sen built the *capability approach*. Confusing the two is the most common mistake in this chapter’s MCQs.

EXPERT’S SOLUTION : Dr. Vikram Joshi, M.A. Development Studies, ISEC Bangalore

Strategic angle. Both MCQs turn on a clean definitional distinction. (i) tests whether you separate quantitative growth from qualitative, positive-only development. (ii) tests whether you correctly attribute the HDI to its real originator. In both cases, the chapter’s own phrasing is the single anchor.

- **(i) Growth vs development.** Picture two questions. “Is my town bigger than it was?” is a growth question (size, can be positive or negative). “Is life in my town better than it was?” is a development question (quality, positive change only). Options (a) and (b) describe size change, which is growth. Option (d) names quality but misses the positive sign, so it is too weak. Only option (c) captures both. Answer: **(c)**.
- **(ii) Who really introduced HDI.** The first UNDP Human Development Report came out in 1990 under Dr Mahbub-ul-Haq’s leadership. The HDI as a single, comparable number across countries was his innovation, designed precisely to shift the

development debate from GDP to people. Amartya Sen provided the capability foundations that the HDI rests on, but the concept and its measurement are credited to Mahbub-ul-Haq. Answer: (c).

Pattern. In every “who introduced” MCQ in this chapter, ask: “Did this person publish a Human Development Report?” Only Mahbub-ul-Haq did. The cleanliness of that test eliminates the other three options instantly. The same approach also helps with the “which is not” family of MCQs in the chapter: pick the textbook’s own keyword and let the option that mismatches stand out.

Final Answer: (i) (c); (ii) (c).

Q 3.2 Answer the following questions in about 30 words.

- (i) What are the three basic areas of human development?
- (ii) Name the four main components of human development.
- (iii) How are countries classified on the basis of human development index?

SOLUTION

Concept used. The UNDP defines human development through three **basic areas** (the outcomes a good life delivers), four **pillars** (the conditions that make those outcomes possible), and one **composite index** (HDI) that scores every country between 0 and 1.

- **(i) Three basic areas.**

- A **long and healthy life**, measured by life expectancy at birth.
- Access to **knowledge**, measured by mean and expected years of schooling.
- A **decent standard of living**, measured by Gross National Income per capita.

These are the three outcomes the HDI captures.

- **(ii) Four main components (pillars).**

- **Equity:** equal access to opportunities regardless of gender, race or income.
- **Sustainability:** today’s development must not reduce tomorrow’s choices.
- **Productivity:** people as the real source of growth through skills and labour.
- **Empowerment:** people having the power to make their own choices.

- **(iii) HDI classification.** Countries are placed in four groups by HDI score:

- **Very high:** ≥ 0.800 .
- **High:** 0.700–0.799.
- **Medium:** 0.550–0.699.

- **Low:** < 0.550 .

Mental hook

Areas vs pillars vs HDI: *areas* are what you measure; *pillars* are what makes those areas possible; the *HDI* is the single number that summarises it all.

Final Answer: Three areas: long life, knowledge, decent standard of living. Four pillars: equity, sustainability, productivity, empowerment. HDI groups: Very high ≥ 0.800 , High $0.700-0.799$, Medium $0.550-0.699$, Low < 0.550 .

EXPERT'S SOLUTION : Prof. Anita Roy, Ph.D. Human Development, IGNOU

Quick reading. Pack each sub-part with the exact UNDP phrase. For (i) use “long and healthy life, access to knowledge, decent standard of living”. For (ii) use the four-pillar list. For (iii) use the four numerical HDI bands.

- **(i) The three outcomes that matter.**

- Long and healthy life: life expectancy at birth.
- Access to knowledge: mean and expected years of schooling.
- Decent standard of living: gross national income per capita.

These are deliberately narrow: not happiness, not freedom, but three measurable outcomes a society can score itself on.

- **(ii) Four pillars, named and parsed.**

- Equity: no person should be locked out of an opportunity because of who they are.
- Sustainability: the next generation must enjoy the same or better choices.
- Productivity: people are the real wealth of a country; investing in their skills pays back.
- Empowerment: people must have the agency to make choices about their own lives.

- **(iii) Four bands and the threshold values.** Very High HDI: ≥ 0.800 ; High: $0.700-0.799$; Medium: $0.550-0.699$; Low: < 0.550 . Memorise 0.800, 0.700, 0.550 as the three cut-offs and the bands fall out.

Why this matters. The three-area, four-pillar, four-band structure is the spine of every question in this chapter. If you can recite it in 15 seconds, you can answer any short, distinguish or long-answer question on human development. Pair the structure with one country example per HDI band (Norway for Very High, India for Medium, Niger for Low) and the answer becomes both precise and concrete.

Final Answer: Three areas (long life, knowledge, standard of living); four pillars (equity, sustainability, productivity, empowerment); four HDI bands (≥ 0.800 , $0.700-0.799$, $0.550-0.699$, < 0.550).

[Download the Full Revision Notes for this chapter →](#)

Q 3.3 Answer the following questions in not more than 150 words.

- (i) What do you understand by the term human development?
- (ii) What do equity and sustainability refer to within the concept of human development?

SOLUTION

Concept used. **Human development** is a people-centred view of development. It treats people, their health, knowledge, choices and dignity, as the real measure of a country's progress. **Equity** and **sustainability** are two of the four pillars: equity acts on the present, sustainability acts across generations.

- **(i) Human development, explained.** Human development is “the process of enlarging people's choices” (Mahbub-ul-Haq's definition). It treats people, not GDP, as the goal of development. A country develops when its people:

- Live longer and healthier lives.
- Gain education and skills.
- Have enough income to live with dignity.

The HDI captures these three outcomes in a single 0-1 score. The underlying ideas come from Pakistani economist Dr Mahbub-ul-Haq and Nobel laureate Prof. Amartya Sen, whose *capability approach* argues that development must expand what people can actually *do* and *be*, not just what they own. Human development is therefore broader than economic growth: growth is a means, while development is the end.

- **(ii) Equity and sustainability.**
 - **Equity:** making opportunities available to every person without discrimination. Equal access to education, jobs, healthcare and justice regardless of gender, caste, class or region. In policy terms, this is what scholarships for girls, reservations for marginalised groups and inclusive labour laws are designed to deliver.
 - **Sustainability:** ensuring that the choices today's generation enjoys remain available for the next. Environmentally, using resources without exhausting them; socially, maintaining institutions (schools, hospitals, courts); financially, not

running up debts future citizens will have to repay.

In short: equity asks “Are choices fairly distributed today?”; sustainability asks “Will choices still exist tomorrow?”.

Final Answer: Human development = enlarging people’s choices through long and healthy lives, knowledge and a decent standard of living. Equity = fair access today; sustainability = preserving choices for tomorrow.

✗ Common Mistake

Do not confuse equity with equality. Equality treats every person the same; equity gives each person what they need to reach the same outcome. The chapter (and the UNDP) use *equity*, which is the broader idea.

♥ Why This Matters

Equity and sustainability together explain almost every public policy debate today: female literacy missions, climate-change adaptation, debt sustainability and inter-generational fairness. The same two ideas turn up in Class 12 Economics (welfare and growth) and Political Science (rights and justice), which is why the boards revisit them so often.

EXPERT’S SOLUTION : Dr. Karthik Iyer, M.Phil Geography, Jamia Millia Islamia

Picture-first. Visualise the UNDP’s HDI like a three-legged stool: one leg for health (long and healthy life), one for knowledge (years of schooling), one for income (standard of living). Beneath the stool sit four floor-supports: equity, sustainability, productivity and empowerment. If any support is missing, the stool wobbles.

- **(i) Human development, the long view.** Dr Mahbub-ul-Haq wrote in the 1990 Human Development Report that “development is about enlarging people’s choices, not just expanding their incomes”. Three choices matter most:
 - the choice to live a long and healthy life;
 - the choice to learn;
 - the choice to afford a decent standard of living.

Amartya Sen’s capability approach gives the philosophical grounding: real development is about what people are actually *able to do and be*, not what they nominally own. So a country with a high GDP but widespread illiteracy or poor health is *not* fully developed. Human development reframes the conversation from “How big is the economy?” to “How free, healthy, knowledgeable and dignified are the people in it?”.

- **(ii) The two pillars unpacked.**

- *Equity sits on the horizontal axis.* It asks whether opportunities, education, jobs, healthcare, justice, are available equally across genders, classes, castes and regions. A society where only one group has good schools is unequal.
- *Sustainability sits on the vertical (time) axis.* It asks whether the choices the current generation enjoys will be available to the next. A society that runs down its forests, ground-water and soils for short-term growth violates sustainability.

Climate policy, female literacy missions and pension reform are all attempts to push these two pillars in the right direction.

Marker's eye. Use the chapter's exact phrases (*enlarging people's choices, capability approach, equity*). Name both founders (Mahbub-ul-Haq and Sen). Add one concrete policy example per pillar (girls' scholarships for equity, renewable-energy targets for sustainability). Those four moves take the answer from generic to specific.

Final Answer: Human development enlarges the choices people have, anchored on health, knowledge and standard of living. Equity = fair access across groups today; sustainability = preserving those choices for future generations.

Key Takeaways

- **Development** is a *qualitative* and *positive* change, distinct from *growth*, which is a value-neutral change in size.
- **Human development** (Mahbub-ul-Haq, 1990) is the process of enlarging people's choices in three areas: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living.
- The four pillars are **equity**, **sustainability**, **productivity** and **empowerment**.
- **HDI** scores every country on a 0-1 scale and groups them into Very High (≥ 0.800), High (0.700–0.799), Medium (0.550–0.699) and Low (< 0.550).
- Amartya Sen's **capability approach** provides the philosophical backbone: development is what people are able to *do* and *be*, not what they own.

End of Exercises

Related Collegedunia Resources

Same chapter — other resources:

- [Revision Notes](#)
- [NCERT Book PDF](#)
- [Handwritten Notes](#)

Continue learning:

- [Ch 2: The World Population: Distribution, Density and Growth](#)
- [Ch 4: Primary Activities](#)
- [Class 12 Geography — All Chapters](#)