



## **Palestinian Readings on the Human Development Report 1998**



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## **The BZU Development Studies Programme**

The Development Studies Programme (DSP) at Birzeit University was established in 1997 as a specialized policy and research-oriented programme for development issues which link the academic and policy-making communities. The DSP grew out of the university-affiliated Human Development Project which produced the first Human Development Profile on Palestine in 1997.

A committee of university academic and administrative personnel supervises the Programme's activities. In addition to its own programme goals, DSP coordinates with local institutions and international agencies on projects requiring research expertise in the development field. The Programme currently receives funding support from the Government of Japan through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

### ***Mission***

The DSP endeavors to provide and interpret developmental concepts and frameworks which will aid in understanding the political, economic and social changes now taking place in Palestinian society and in promoting sustainable development planning. The Programme also aims to raise public awareness of development issues in order to improve individual and institutional capabilities, to enable and empower the community to contribute effectively to the development process.

### ***Objectives and Activities***

To achieve these goals, the DSP:

1. conducts academic and policy-oriented research and studies;
2. prepares and publishes the Human Development Report on Palestine;
3. provides library and outreach services through the DSP resource center;
4. encourages academic institutions to integrate development concepts into their curriculum by preparing an academic programme in the field of development studies;
5. organizes a diversity of community outreach activities, including conferences, workshops and symposia which bring together various sectors concerned with development issues.



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## **Preface**

On November 2, 1998, the Development Studies Program (DSP) at Birzeit University and the UNDP cosponsored a seminar entitled “Human Development Report 1998 – :Palestinian Readings.”

This seminar was one of a series of activities arranged by the DSP with the aim of consolidating a developmental culture and reaching at policy recommendations related to development issues in Palestine. A group of Palestinian and international experts and practitioners attended this seminar during which the International Human Development Report was summarized.

The 1998 Report focused on world consumption according to factors such as size, trends and concomitant results. The report disclosed that despite the historically unprecedented peak in accumulated material wealth, the numbers of homeless, unemployed and hungry people are on the rise globally, thus suggesting that the gap between rich and poor is increasing.

The report presented suggestions for dealing with problems of poverty and the environment in developing countries. Emphasis was placed upon the importance of reviewing trends of consumption and steering it towards human development.

The participants in the workshop stressed the importance of creating a Palestinian policy for consumption, keeping in mind available resources and focusing on future generations. Moreover, consideration should be taken as to the transitional nature of the Palestinian situation.

We hope this report makes a useful contribution to the current debate on human development both locally and worldwide, thus including Palestine as an active player in the on-going discourse.

Nader Said  
Director, Dev.Studies Programme



## **On Excessive Consumption and the 1998 UNDP Report**

**Dr. Nader Izzat Said\***

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Ph.D., Sociology; director of Development Studies Programme.



I welcome you all on behalf of Birzeit University and thank you for your presence at this workshop, which will discuss and hopefully clarify an issue of great importance on both the local and international levels. This is the issue of excessive consumption and its results, as regards the loss of natural resources, the destruction of the environment and the increase in discrimination between rich and poor on the local and international levels.

The issue under discussion today is universal and it would be useful to analyze it within the context of historical colonial relations between the West and other countries. This relationship can still be observed today by way of the neo-colonialist form of economic and cultural domination by the rich countries over Third World countries. Similarly, the view of the Third World as a source of raw materials and cheap labor coincides with relegating the Third World to being merely a market for all that is produced in the United States and other capitalist countries. Some Third World countries are viewed as satellites asserting the policies of the developed world. In a statement made by the President of the United States, a connection was made between "emancipation from political dictatorships" and increasing export rates to the countries that are still in the process of state building after having been exposed to significant political changes. President Clinton stated that 25% of US exports went to countries that were "transformed into democracies."

As for Palestine, the West Bank and Gaza Strip constitute the largest market for consumption of Israeli products (after the US). The disparity between the consumption rates of Palestinians and Israelis, especially of water and land resources, should be given serious consideration. In addition, political agreements and transformations in the social structure have been accompanied by an unequaled flow of consumption averages and especially of imported goods. These worldwide tendencies (referring to cereals, hamburgers, internet, satellites, entertainment, etc), have had negative implications on local production and traditional consumption patterns. These changes have also been accompanied by deepening social disparities between the various strata within society. Statistics have shown that the poor in Palestine (representing 23% of the population) consume only 9% of goods and services. There is a marked increase in disparities when comparing the consumption of those within the highest income brackets to the rest of society. Similarly, disparities are clear on the level of the governorates and other social groups, as some areas pay a high toll health-wise as a result of environmental pollution which is inevitably a benefit for

some of the rich. These areas are deprived of reasonable living standards. Half the population in southern Gaza live below the poverty line and the percentages of poverty in some areas of Jenin and Hebron are six times as severe as in other areas. And families that are supported by women suffer from poverty more than those supported by men.

The issue of consumption must be analyzed within a broader context. The following assertions may prove useful in the discussion:

- 1- As Palestinians, we are undergoing a crucial and decisive phase. We feel that the Palestinian national project is in great danger due to the strictures placed by various parties. Israeli pressure is especially significant in its effect on our capability as a Palestinian people to get out of the bottleneck and lay down the bases for sustainable human development. From this premise, we call upon the United Nations and other international organizations to reaffirm the Palestinian dilemma as it is an issue related to basic rights which have not yet been realized. These rights refer to those asserted by the UN itself within UN Resolutions (i.e. the right to self-determination and the rights of return and development). In its very essence, the Palestinian problem is not one of funding, nor is it restricted to the raising of living standards in the narrow sense, since living conditions are connected to people's ability to choose and Palestinians are still deprived of this right.
- 2- Consumption in Palestine is still, to a large extent, related to Palestinians' right to the possession and management of their natural resources and their right to development. Palestinian capabilities remain limited within the scope of consumption management as available resources remain under Israeli domination and control. Palestinian markets remain monopolized by Israeli capitalists and their agents. They are inundated with goods and services that do not even partially comply with the basic requirements needed by the economy to achieve development. Thus, rendering the Palestinian economy and its development capabilities contingent upon the political process and the mechanisms of the Israeli market destroys Palestinians' opportunities to achieve remunerative development. In addition to all of the above, a consumption culture is being promoted and adopted by various social classes. The relationship with the Israelis has resulted in the destruction of the basic elements of the environment, land, water and air. Palestinian efforts towards management of these resources are limited.

- 3- As Palestinians, we are being affected by the major transformations on the world arena--globalization, the free market and unipolar political and economic hegemony. We cannot deny the fact that we are living the epitome of a consumption culture. As is the case in other parts of the world, consumption is not distributed equitably among individuals, groups and areas of a society. On the contrary, dangerous contrasts exist among the various social strata; the West Bank and Gaza; the north, the midlands and the south; the rich and the poor; and women and men.

The Development Studies Programme has taken the initiative of convening this seminar in view of its conviction that the international debate on the subject should no doubt be accompanied by local discussions dealing with the particularity of the Palestinian situation. The issue we will deal with today has become of extreme importance and it has not been seriously discussed until now. No doubt, such an issue has environmental dimensions related to the economic policies of the Palestinian National Authority. Therefore we approached Dr. Yousef Abu Safiyyeh (Minister of the Environment) and Mr. Timothy Rothermel (UNDP Special Representative) to request their participation in this workshop. We also asked Mr. Ibrahim Daqqaq ( a well-known Development Specialist) and Ms. Eileen Kuttub (Director of the Women's Studies Center, Birzeit University) to present a critical analysis of the contents of the international report on excessive consumption.

This workshop is also an expression of the deepening cooperation between Birzeit University and the various United Nations Agencies, especially our partner in organizing this workshop--the UNDP.

I thank you for your attendance and hope that this workshop will constitute a beginning towards greater interest in the subject of consumption on the research and policy planning levels.





## **Statement by Timothy S. Rothermel\***

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\*Special Representative of the Administrator, United Nations Development Programme/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP)



It is a great pleasure for me to be with you today, and it is a great occasion for the United Nations Development Programme. UNDP's Human Development Reports, first inaugurated in 1990, have become one of the most widely quoted, debated, and respected contributions to international development literature. I am, needless to say, very pleased that such a distinguished gathering has been assembled today to discuss the most recent UNDP Human Development Report and its implications for Palestine.

If I may, rather than discussing the substance of the 1998 Human Development Report, let me share with you a little of the history of these reports and how they came into being. During the 1970s and 1980s, the Administrator of UNDP, Mr. Bradford Morse, began sharing with the audiences that he addressed his conviction that the development success stories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century involved more than wealth from natural resources, more than rising incomes, and more than effective governance and the rule of law. It was his intuitive and yet unproved thesis that while natural resources, incomes and good governance were all important conditions for development to take place, what was more essential was the investment in human capital, the empowerment of people and their skills and experiences that were at the heart of sustainable development.

As academics and development practitioners began to explore this thesis, the world of the 1970s and 1980s was faced with overburdening debt in most developing countries, the high human costs of structural adjustment, high unemployment and poverty. Attention was being placed on quick-fix solutions such as debt repayment rather than the human and qualitative dimensions of development. In this context, poverty could wait but the banks could not.

Attitudes began to change with the publication of the first UNDP Human Development Report in 1990. It challenged some of the common practices of the times, provided the highest standards of intellectual rigor, and like the reports which have followed, represented the complete independence of its authors. The 1990 Human Development Report was about people and how development enlarges their choices. It was about more than GNP growth, more than income and wealth, and more than producing commodities capital. It stressed that a person's access to income may be one of his or her choices, but it is not the sum total of human endeavor. Certainly that report was controversial, as it included a human development index, ranking countries from the richest to the poorest using a combination of factors (i.e.

life expectancy, access to water supply and sanitation, access to health services, literacy, food security, military expenditures, gender equality, etc) rather than traditional measurements. Many governments were not happy with the result of a lower national ranking than they felt was deserved. As a result, the UNDP Human Development Report of 1990 very nearly became an isolated event.

Fortunately, it did not; and since 1990, every year, UNDP has published as annual volume of the Human Development Report. Each year, the methodology of gauging human development and the statistical data on which human development is measured has progressed. To a certain extent, the UNDP Human Development Reports have coincided with the major themes of United Nations conferences which have taken place since 1990, including the environment and gender and poverty, as well as the importance of peoples' participation, development resource allocations and equity. One of the essential ingredients of these Human Development Reports over the years has continued to be their intellectual independence and integrity.

The 1998 Human Development Report, launched last September, takes as its theme the subject of consumption with some characteristically sobering data. For example, the annual investment in basic education worldwide is \$8 billion. Another example cited in the Report is that annual investments in basic health and nutrition worldwide are \$13 billion while \$35 billion is spent annually on business entertainment in Japan. Overall, 20% of the world's population consume 86% of global consumption, leaving obvious disparities. I am sure that your discussions will focus on this issue.

During this decade, UNDP has encouraged the production of national Human Development Reports, and in July 1997, thanks to the efforts of Dr. Ibrahim Daqqaq, the *Palestine Human Development Profile 1996-1997* was produced. Thanks to the efforts of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and Birzeit University's Development Studies Programme, a second, truly Palestinian, Human Development Report is in the making and will be launched next year. The goals of the international and national reports are to stimulate thought, discussion, and even sometimes debate, about the enlargement and enrichment of human lives and society. I am hopeful that in this wonderful society, the *UNDP Human Development Report 1998* will make a contribution to that end and again, I thank all of you for your participation in this event.

## **Human Development Report 1998 Review**

**Yousef Abu Safieh \***

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Minister of Environment & Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council



First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to Birzeit University and their Development Studies Program for their serious efforts in this field. I would equally like to thank the UNDP, which has initiated work on development in Palestine since 1990.

The first thing that comes to mind when commenting on the report is that the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) is not mentioned within the chapter on the situation of the workforce. Neither was it mentioned within the applications concerning consumption. Thus, it is despite the fact that a report was prepared last year concerning human development in Palestine, that the PNA has not yet appeared on the world arena concerning human development.

This report has been based upon the basic requirements for human development, defining the level of human development with criteria such as longevity, knowledge and the ability to obtain the financial resources necessary for a certain standard of living. While I would assume that a Palestinian individual's income is not rated at the top of world incomes, nevertheless if we consider other indicators such as longevity and know-how, Palestinians seem to be at an extremely high level. Yet obtaining the resources necessary for a certain standard of living cannot be our sole main focus when discussing human development.

As for human development in the West Bank and Gaza, in relation to the Palestinian dilemma, it is common knowledge that we have very limited natural resources and that thus investment in human resources and their development should be our first priority. It is not necessary that many other resources be available or that annual per capita income be at the top of the list of priorities, regardless of the criteria and indicators within this report.

The current top priority on the world agenda is human rights and this, no doubt, includes matters connected to health, development, nutrition, clothing, housing, healthcare, social welfare, education, security and social integration; that is, all the aspects of human rights. However, the only aspect overlooked by the universal declaration on human rights is that which is concerned with world environmental conditions. And this despite worldwide concern and emphasis placed on the issue.

The protection of the environment in Palestine is one of the most important aspects that has been and is still exposed to violation by the Israelis. We, as

Palestinians, do not have any rights or authority over our natural resources; we also do not have any mechanisms or the capability to protect our surrounding environment. This, of course, has its obvious effects on the level of human development within Palestine. Agriculture, for example, represents 30% of GDP or local produce; yet areas of arable land have not been expanded in the West Bank for 30 years. In Gaza, as well, areas of arable land are very limited. There has also been no development whatsoever in the field of agriculture itself, apart from the use of plastic coverings to produce a green-housing effect, and irrigation methods that correspond to the limited amounts of water.

In my opinion, unless there is more emphasis placed upon agricultural development, land reclamation and the conversion of non-irrigated land to irrigated land in order to meet our needs, no advances will be achieved on the developmental level. Yet discussion of economic and sustainable development proves futile when considering the reality of the Palestinian situation--the inability to obtain complete control over our economic resources, particularly our water resources. Thus, the total depletion of underground water reservoirs in the Gaza Strip has officials there debating other possible sources of potable water. There is also the additional problem of an infrastructure for wastewater management both in the West Bank and Gaza. This constitutes another burden on the environment, encumbering economic development and resulting in decreased amounts of production due to the polluted marine environment. The pollution of the marine environment is not only an ecological crisis, but has huge implications for health and human development for the simple reason that it is a potential source of protein for the Palestinian population. Yet Palestinian consumption of marine protein is minimal when one considers the fact that the greater proportion of 2000 tons of fish caught annually are exported due to high prices. Thus 99% of the population is unable to purchase this source of protein, expiate during the high season of fish cash.

Our circumstances in general bear dichotomous implications. For example, on the one hand we have a high percentage of university graduates, but on the other not enough potable water, water suitable for irrigation, or a wastewater drainage system to ensure healthy living conditions. As a result we find that the bulk of the Health Ministry's expenditures (more than 100 million dollars) are not on hospitals but on primary healthcare and the healing of illnesses that could easily be avoided if proper health and environmental conditions were provided.



It is evident that human development focuses on two major aspects-- economics and economic resources, whether agricultural, industrial or concerning the infrastructure of natural resources. It is essential to define available and unavailable resources and those which can or cannot be utilized. When considering the water resources in Palestine, statistics show that 2 billion cubic meters of water are available for both Israeli and Palestinian use. Yet how much is the actual Palestinian allocation? One can probably reach at approximate figures after considering the following facts-- 1.75 billion cubic meters are consumed by Israel, while in Gaza farmers are abandoning the fields, their main source of livelihood. Thus how can one discuss the development of a country that cannot even produce its daily bread or at least a high percentage of it? China constitutes one-fifth of the world's population, while it possesses only 7% of the world's arable land, it is not only self-sufficient, but also exports some food products. Yet we in most Arab countries import more than 80% of our needs, just to produce our daily loaf of bread, despite the available resources.

Why do people abandon agriculture? This is most likely due to the fact that they are not trained for it; thus they search for other sources of income. It is imperative, therefore, when discussing development in Palestine, to focus on both the agricultural sector and the industrial sector, while taking into consideration that the industries currently established in Palestine are merely transformational.

Average income is a misleading indicator if depended upon as a factor or indicator for determining the level of development. For example, when looking at average Palestinian income, one can find individuals whose monthly income reaches \$1000; but occurrences like these are limited. It is more typical to find far lower levels of income, such as those earned by PNA employees. In this case average income does not exceed 1500 N.I.S. However, at the other end of the spectrum there exists a social stratum with a monthly income of 4000 N.I.S and above. And if we compare a Palestinian and an Israeli, two people who must face the same conditions (i.e. both people consuming from the same nutritional sources), how can we expect those with the lower income mentioned above, deal with such conditions?

The main contradiction in the nature of our discourse is that while we discuss issues like healthy nutrition, education and culture, an individual in the Palestinian case is mainly concerned with the bare necessities (i.e. his

daily bread). This contradiction in priorities is a condition common in most poor countries. We can conclude that when debating distribution and equity, the problem is not the absence of materials, resources or nutrition, but their unjust allocation. This is the injustice and crisis that we are living in Palestine at the moment. It is also just as essential, when speaking of development, to have a just distribution of wealth.

Thus it is imperative that we review our methods and policies concerning development, even as far as defining what we mean by the term "development" itself. And when conceptualizing sustainable development, I believe that if expedient measures are not taken to prevent the total destruction of our natural resources, we shall reach a point of no return. We should put forward genuinely applicable recommendations within this report on how to provide sustainable development for our natural resources. We should work within this context, as our land and natural resources form the basis for our human development.

**The UNDP Report on Human Development- 1998**  
**“An Analysis of the Performance and the Substance”**

**Ibrahim Daqqaq\***

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Development Advisor, Team Leader of the 1996-1997 human Development . Profile



## *Introduction*

The UNDP has issued yearly reports on human development since 1990, representing a distinguished contribution to current efforts to enhance the concept of development in general, and human development in particular. The UNDP also makes observations on global developmental realities and discloses statistics related to the imbalance between countries, especially between industrialized and Third World countries<sup>1</sup> in numerous developmental sectors.

The Reports present a wide range of statistical information on developmental issues in the world. Statistics are included to illustrate issues. In addition there is an attempt at making connections between the developmental phenomena which it observes.

The Report on Human Development for 1998 is the ninth report issued by the "Program." The first Report was issued in 1990. Annual reports have maintained a methodologically simple tradition. They observe the realities of Human Development in the world by assuming a particular perspective.

The Reports issued so far have focused on the following issues: The Concept of Human Development and its Measurement in 1990; Funding in 1991; the Global Implications of Human Development in 1992; Participation by the Masses in 1993; The New Dimensions of Nutritional Security in 1994; Gender and Human Development in 1995; Economic Growth and Human Development in 1996; and Human Development and Poverty in 1997. The 1998 Report tackles excessive consumption and its effect on development. In addition to the reports issued by the Program itself, various regions and countries have issued through 1998, 115 comprehensive, regional and partial reports.

This paper reviews the Program's methods of encouraging human development, the regression of the definitions it has adopted, and some of the content found in its annual reports. I mention all the above as an introduction to some comments on the 1998 Report. The paper ends with a general summary of the review.

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<sup>1</sup>I have used the term Third World instead of developing world or developing countries because it is more clear and precise.

The paper bases its review of the 1998 Report upon the Palestinian experience over the past three decades and the internal dynamics within the West Bank and Gaza. It also looks at external dynamics achieved in the Palestinian Diaspora under the leadership of the PLO. The congruence of these dynamics after the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority is also discussed. The paper also refers to Arab fostering of Palestinian development without going into its details.

### *General Background*

Development is not a strictly modern concept, nor is it stable as regards its definition. A quick glance at the various religious missions, at the efforts of reformists who have defended the human right to a peaceful and dignified existence, and to the various developmental theories, reveals that efforts by the “Program” to enhance and spread human development are a modern rehash of these missions. This means that above and beyond the things I have mentioned, concepts have been adapted to suit variables that have appeared over time. This rehash is important for two reasons. First is the need to establish human development on a basis of values that are amenable to the human conscience, making crucial the role of both religious and secular institutions and organizations. A second reason of import is founding the values of human development, modernizing them and manifesting in them the human essence. Man is, in fact, the focal point around which the developmental process turns.

The definition of sustainable human development and the guide created by the Program are very widespread in use as UN organizations have adopted them as an escape, to rid themselves of the problem of the theft of development funds. The Third World and some industrialized countries are suffering from this phenomenon. UN agencies are concerned with the work done by the UNDP as it concentrates on the issues which threaten humanity, such as environmental problems, excessive consumption, perishable resources and especially the population explosion. Apart from that, there is an – unproven – conviction that the program is neutral and that its developmental researches are unbiased.<sup>2</sup> They all transcend ideological differences and local experience by providing a suitable guide to measure development.

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<sup>2</sup>Myrdal, Gunar. *Asian Drama: An inquiry into the Poverty of Nations*. Penguin books, 1968, pp 12-13

The fact that the Program (as one of the organizations of the UN) is interested in enhancing the concept of development, and is preparing a guide for it, indicates the continuing interest of the world community in development. As a precursor to the Program's initiative, there were many international documents, the most prominent of which was "The Declaration of the Right to Development" issued by the General Assembly on the 4<sup>th</sup> of Dec. 1986. This declaration is extremely important, as it constitutes the legal and political bases upon which development is carried out worldwide. This in itself has widened both theoretical and practical interest in the subject, and has consolidated it as a basic right drawn from the UN charter and equal in importance to the right of self-determination for all nations.<sup>3</sup>

Sustainability is a more recent addition to the concept of development adopted by the Program. It has also become one of the basic pillars of development since it carries, within both the religious and secular contexts, the connotations of solidarity amongst the generations, continuity of human life, human happiness and a guarantee of sufficiency.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is significant to consider wise investment in human and natural resources in order to achieve the aspired solidarity amongst generations, and to guarantee their capability to contribute towards continuity of life itself.<sup>5</sup> This means allowing all the generations to partake in the responsibility for present and future developmental aims. This form of solidarity carries comprehensively exciting meanings, as it stands against unreasonable excess in dispersal of both human and material resources. Additionally, sustainability means participation, the rule of law, delegation of authority, and accountability. It also means social cohesion and wise procedures in the fields of education, health, economics, investment, public performance and, above all, the preservation of the environment.

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<sup>3</sup>Resolution No 128/4. Article 1, paragraph (2).

<sup>4</sup>Refer to the World Declaration on Human Rights, 1948

<sup>5</sup>Refer to the Report on Human Development 1998, p. 14; the Land Summit Resolutions--Rio 1992; the Copenhagen Summit 1995.

## *Reports on Human Development- Context and Measurement*

### **Human Development Reports--Context**

My review of the human development reports lies in their distinction to both generalize or specify frameworks and contents. The reports depend, from the methodological point of view, upon generalization on the one hand and specificity on the other. They deal with the aspects of observing and measuring development worldwide, without discussing the details of each country observed, and they measure developmental activity uniformly. However, they later return specificity and narrow down research to one focus within the annual report on the developmental track.

The *Palestine Human Development Profile 1996-1997* presents us with its own concept of development: "This concept realizes the importance of development, its comprehensiveness and the human right to development with sustainable qualities, on a basis of equality and justice. It also realizes the necessity for placing developmental strategies with the human being as its first and foremost concern."<sup>6</sup>

The UNDP's definition of development, despite its importance, does not help or reassure the Third World. It is defined according to the experiences of those who wrote it and those who have dealt with it or have been affected by it. Thus it falls short of realizing the complex and intricately intertwined factors of development, their reactions to each other or to external pressure, within one society, let alone the universal society. It remains, as is the case with other current social science definitions, curbed by the dominant Western culture<sup>7</sup> and is not responsive to review by other societies and cultures. The translation of Third World issues and priorities results in strange vocabulary, and usually solutions to problems can be deduced from it, yet only as long as the original people concerned with the problem cannot provide a credible solution. Within this framework one can understand the reasons for the backwardness and increasing gap in development--and thus in culture--between the industrial and Third World. One example is the

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<sup>6</sup>*Palestine Human Development Profile 1996-1997*, Birzeit University (Sustainable Human Development Project), 1997, p4.

<sup>7</sup>Refer to: Tadaro, Michael P. and Myrdal Gunar, op cit, pp 6-9, *Economic Development in the World*, London and New York, Longman, 1977, p9



Program's disregard of the role of western military power in obstructing development in the world.<sup>8</sup> And yet it claims to be the promoter of development worldwide. Its disregard for mentioning military and economic sanctions imposed by the West in general, and the US in particular, on countries like Iraq, Iran, Libya, Pakistan, and others, without any legal prerogative, is another departure. While the Program continues its negligence, problems in the Third World are on the rise and no reasonable solutions are being found for them.

The Program's attempts at solving these problems remain, at this stage, mere attempts. In light of the ambiguity of the Program's declared intentions and its performance, its talk of uprooting poverty, for example, has become mere lip service to the poor whilst they are prohibited from even reaching the resources necessary for their development. The poor are also denied education, health services, information, culture and encouragement to drag themselves out of their state of poverty. Yet from the point of view of the West, the poor are still helpless and unwilling to help themselves.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the United Nations and the UNDP's disregard of the Third World when formulating the New World system, the Third World has not succumbed to the West; it has defended its right to development. It has sought industriously to help in the establishment of what is known as the "New Economic Order" and the "New Information Order" (The Macbride Committee Project), in order to protect itself and to rationalize the global economic and media performance to enact human development worldwide. The Third World also had its say on the defense of the environment at the Rio de Janeiro Land Conference and at the Kyoto Conference in Japan, standing in the face of the dangerously aggressive behavior of the industrialized countries, particularly the US. Third World countries also struggled at the Copenhagen Conference to establish their social rights. Its

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<sup>8</sup>One of the interesting events is that the US wishes to transgress the Security Council, as in the case of Iraq 16-17/1998 and is striving to widen the scope of the NATO alliance outside its regional boundaries. This is occurring with the knowledge that the alliance came into existence in order to deter the Soviet Union from intervening in its members' affairs and to defend them in the case of outside aggression. Refer to Al-Hroub, Khaled. "Globalization of the NATO: From defense of geography to defense of interests....wherever they are" Al- Hayah (London), 10 January 1998. Khaled al-Hroub adds " the alliance has suffered lack of a new strategy after the end of the cold war, the question is why should the alliance remain since the Soviet Union has collapsed. Alternative strategic concepts were adopted in the summits in London (1990), Rome (1991) and Berlin (1994), which called for the necessity and vitality of keeping the alliance alive in order to face new dangers such as leakage of nuclear weapons, 'fundamentalism' and any others within the Atlantic and European spheres".

<sup>9</sup>Latosh, Serge. *Westernization of the world--A research about the significance of stereotyping the world*, Third World Publishers, 1992, pp 7-9, 25-28, 46

women struggled at Peking for a just system concerning women's issues. The Third World is still struggling for its right to development as mentioned in the international declarations.

The Human Development Reports issued by the Program highlight and stress deteriorating conditions being faced today. It also continues to keep in mind the traditional problems resulting from reasons it was not party to, such as the widening of the hole in the ozone layer, pollution, unwise consumption of perishable resources and other problems. The crisis of world indebtedness and its increase at high rates threatens the future of indebted countries' economies, and reduces their financial capabilities to spend on education, health, housing, clean potable water and waste water management. In addition to this, the Third World now faces, as a result of economic and cultural globalization, problems related to increasing monopolies in various fields, especially in information and technology. Finally, the Third World suffers from the fact that its development remains subject to the international balance of power. It suffers a marginalized role in the on-going process of formulating a comprehensive developmental system. And all this is occurring at a time when its capability to broaden its choices and defend itself are being reduced. In short, despite providing a summary of developmental conditions worldwide point by point, these Reports remain unable to present an overall picture of the developmental reality. When presenting developmental realities worldwide, the reports do not transcend the state of observation to that of diagnosis and analysis of the reasons for the obstruction of development, or furthermore to unveil the true reasons behind lack of development.<sup>10</sup>

Attempts at regulating developmental observations, and at achieving a unified definition of development, its measurement, and dissemination would make regulation and dissemination on the practical level easily accountable. One could then assess the reasons and advocates of regulation better. The methodology utilized by the reports and the preachy tone allowing them to avoid calling things by their proper name, or give terms contradictory connotations (implying that what the West has a right to--democracy, development, human rights, etc--the Third World does not) and

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<sup>10</sup> Samarah, Adel. "Comments on the UN Human Development Report: Numbers that are not politicized are afflicted by Anemia" in Al-Quds Newspaper, 22 November 1988

avoiding mentioning any political dimensions related to development<sup>11</sup> is an attempt by the Program to present solutions that do not aggravate the West.

### **Measurement of Human Development--The Index**

The Human Development Index is composed of three elements:

- 1) The mean per capita income from GDP (i.e. an individual's portion according to purchasing power parity with the dollar), which is calculated at between \$100 and \$6040)
- 2) Average life expectancy, perimeters for which have been calculated at between 25 and 85 years.
- 3) Average education (the average indicator of literacy for adults (two-thirds) and the percentage of those who have reached elementary or secondary and high school education as well (one third)). The perimeters are between 0% and 100% with other indicators consolidating this.<sup>12</sup>

In light of the differences in priorities existing in the world in general and in the Third World in particular, the measurement of development is always faced with the ever widening gap between the haves and the have-nots. Therefore, the structure of this Index and its interdependent relations must be questioned. However, the three indicators upon which the program depends in building the Index are so important that people are reluctant to criticize them. No one can deny the importance of education and health and the fact that they should be at the top of the list of human interests. Additionally, the indicators continuously added by the Program do enhance the preciseness of the index (i.e. indicators related to gender, poverty, etc).

Yet despite this they remain unable to keep up with technological, economic, social, cultural and value based changes, or with the observation of the dynamics of their development. Queries arise for three reasons: 1) restricting the index to three elements only 2) the haphazardness in allotting a certain weight to each element 3) the static nature of the index. The program neither presents an adequate argument for its choice of three elements, nor for the weight given to each element. The index does not indicate the type of development it is meant to illuminate. That is, it is

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<sup>11</sup>ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Profile, p.4

merely quantitative and thus does not correspond to the philosophy of human development. For example, how is it possible to ignore considering lack of security when discussing development, and still attempt to observe sustainability in countries like Algeria, Ireland or the Congo? It is similarly the case concerning the Kurds, the Basque in Spain and the Albanians in Kosovo, all a people deprived of the right to choose their future course. And if we move to Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, we find a different problem, as these three Arab countries are still suffering from colonialist occupation by Israel. Thus we return to the questions, how can development be measured and sustainability observed under conditions such as those of occupation? And how can one use the same measurement to compare conditions in countries that do not suffer from occupation, but from other kinds of problems?

The subject of measuring development is an issue that requires serious discussion and decision-making, but has not received a quorum. The few attempts that have been made have not had much success. The Program's Reports, debates and the curricula adopted by development institutions all reveal that the index has not yet been fully established and that its structure is still being studied and evaluated. It is being adapted from the point of view of the paradigm, the elements, the information and the databases used to build it.<sup>13</sup>

The World Bank utilizes a less complex measurement. It finds that fluctuations in GDP are an appropriate measurement to monitor the situation in a given country from an economic/developmental point of view. And it answers its critics by stating that economic growth has the social element represented in the benefits that reach an individual through a trickle-down effect. The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) has attempted to present a measurement for the phenomena of social progress or slowdown; however, it has not been very successful.<sup>14</sup> There have been several attempts also made by international, official and unofficial institutions worldwide, but they have remained partial.

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<sup>13</sup> Nuscheler, Franz. "Old Wine New Skins?" *D&C*, No.3/1998 and Abdullah Ismael Sabri, *Human Development: the concept, the measurement, the significance*, Cairo, July 1994, p28.

<sup>14</sup> Abdallah Ismael Sabri *ibid*.

## *The Human Development Report 1998*

The *Human Development Report 1998* comes more than a year after issuing the *Palestine Human Development Profile 1996-1997*, and less than a year before issuing a report on human development in Palestine. That is, the 1998 general Report was issued during a period between two stages of observing human development in Palestine. This fact renders it necessary to consider the Report from a Palestinian perspective, after it has been placed within the Palestinian framework.

### **The Report and the State of World Development**

The Report presents a picture of the developmental reality worldwide, observed from the perspective of excessive consumption, the increasing gap between the rich and the poor, and the problems that arise therein. No doubt, observing excessive consumption and its effects upon the population worldwide assists in diagnosing a general case.

The Report does not paint a pretty picture to cover up the realities, nor does it encourage taking an optimistic view of the future. In this respect it is no different from the other reports issued since 1990. Instead, it arouses serious concern over the present plight of humanity and the future of coming generations. It appears that the Report's call for the sustainability of development is in a valley where it is merely echoed while no one heeds it, as the world situation today is quite the opposite of what the Report calls for.

The number of hungry people in the world is rising by 230,000 daily according to information made available in 1998. And the increase in population for 1998 was 84 million, which is the difference between the number of new births for 1998 (approx. 137 million) and the number of deaths (approx. 53 million). The question that immediately arises is: Is our planet capable of producing enough food for the 5.9 billion now living upon its surface, in addition to the millions that will be born in the next decades? And if that is possible, equitable distribution of this produce be guaranteed?<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Reid, T.R., "Can the planet produce enough food to feed the billions who will be born in the future?" in *National Geographic*, No. 4, October 1998, p. 58

The question at first seems to relate to economics. However, Professor Ho Chi Kian Son Yat Sin University emphasizes that this is in fact a “politically related question.”<sup>16</sup> And I would have to agree. The 1998 Report indicates that 20% of the world population spend 86% of total expenditure on consumption, while more than 100 million people are unable to satisfy their most basic needs. Here, consumption is related to issues concerning income, sanitation, potable water and provision of appropriate energy, resources, housing and health, educational and nutritional services. Apart from the deprivation experienced by the poor, they are exposed to the most dangerous environmental hazards due to various forms of pollution, the destruction of nature, extraction of minerals, petroleum, natural gas and the exaggerated consumption of non-renewable resources. All this is accompanied by a total disregard for these facts by manufacturers in the industrialized world, especially in the West, and of the dangerous results of this excessive behavior. If we look at the situation of the poor in comparison to that of the world’s rich in terms of specific indicators, the resulting dangers will be more evident.

One can reach some useful and astounding comparisons from the Report. It estimates affluent people’s consumption of energy as being 17 times higher than that of the poor and their consumption of meat as 11 times higher. The affluent’s general consumption is 16 times more than that of the poor. It should be kept in mind that 90% of the poorest people’s portion of GNP does not exceed \$750 per annum. The problem can be seen more clearly when revising annual expenditure on some forms of consumption worldwide. Elementary education, water, sanitation, mother and child care and nutritional health are allocated no more than \$40 million per annum while the world expenditure on drug abuse is 10 times this amount (\$400 million) and military expenditure more than 19 times (approx. \$780 million).

### **The Report and Developmental Realities in the Arab World**

The report deals with conditions in the Arab World by discussing the conditions of some of its countries. Countries that have produced their own reports on their developmental conditions<sup>17</sup> include Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Sudan, the United Arab Emirates and

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<sup>16</sup>ibid., p74

<sup>17</sup>UNDP, Human Development Report 1998, p17

Yemen. Palestine as well has also issued a Profile on Human Development. The report does not carry out comparisons between Arab countries but instead presents some indicators about them and Israel, which aids in comparing the two, an issue of great concern to us as Palestinians and Arabs.

The Human Development Index Table includes some countries in the Arab world, and, interestingly enough, these are countries in which the motivation for integration and unification exists.<sup>18</sup> The Report shows that five of these countries are categorized as having "High Human Development," eight others fall under the category "Medium Human Development," and another four can be placed under the category "Low Human Development." Due to the limitations of the Human Development Index, which cannot accurately portray the developmental realities of these countries, a reading of the historical development of the Arab Region during this century would reveal the external elements that have had a role in creating a large part of the differences between Arab countries, and between them and Israel. Of this, the most important elements are the division and exploitation of the Arab states by some Western states, and the establishment of the State of Israel without their consent.<sup>19</sup>

The arrangement of the Arab states on the Human Development Index's scale<sup>20</sup> is a descending one as follows: Bahrain holds the first place in human development amongst the Arab Nations placing at #43. It is followed by the United Arab Emirates (48), Kuwait (54), Libya (64), Lebanon (66), Saudi Arabia (70), Oman (71), Syria (81), Algeria (82), Tunisia (83), Jordan (87), Egypt (112) and Iraq (127), and Yemen (151) at the bottom of the scale. In order to draw a comparison, one has to mention that Canada occupies top place while Sierra Leone is at the bottom of the list. Israel

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<sup>18</sup> Sa'doun Hammadi. "The place of Arab unity within the modern Arab Awakening", *Al-Mustaqbal Al-Arabi*, Beirut, issue 234, August 1998, and *Studies in Arab Development – The Reality and the Prospects*, from the series – *Al-Mustaqbal Al-Arabi* (13) Arab Unity Studies Center, Beirut August 1998. One of the important references on the subject is, Al-Khouli, Usama Ameen (editor) *The Arabs and Globalization – Research and Debates of the seminar organized by the Center for Arab Unity*, Beirut, Center for Arab Unity, June 1998 and especially Abdallah Ismael Sabri, "The Arabs and Globalization: Arab Economy and Development" p 382-386.

<sup>19</sup> For example, The Sykes-Picot Agreement (1917), the partition of Palestine and its occupation and transforming the larger part of its population into refugees.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p20 -21

comes in at #22. Palestine was not mentioned in this scale because it produced a profile instead of a Report.<sup>21</sup>

Algeria occupies seventh place among the ten countries that were the quickest in achieving positive results in their struggle against illiteracy among those aged 15 and over between 1970-1995. The percentage change in progress was 148%. In comparison, Mauritania holds third place among those with the slowest progress in combating illiteracy (40%), and is followed by Egypt (60%). The Report also compared gender disparity in the conditions of males and females<sup>22</sup> (GDI and HDI rank), expenditure on food and energy, transportation, health and education,<sup>23</sup> and the unavailability of safe water or any basic form of sanitation<sup>24</sup> in some Arab countries.

The categorizations I have indicated do not help to formulate a definition of the conditions of human development in the Arab world in general and Palestine in particular. I shall refer to public (government) expenditure in some countries of the Arab world (not including Palestine) due to its special importance. The reason for this importance is that a high percentage of expenditure in the Arab world is governmental. It represents a high percentage of national income and adapts the distribution of consumption between the social classes.<sup>25</sup>

If we review two indicators of public expenditure in some Arab countries--defense and social services--it would become evident that there are objective reasons for the slow rate of development in these countries. I am referring here to the differences between the positive indicators, which the development index attributes to some Gulf States, and the process of developmental deprivation to which they are exposed. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain have reached the higher rungs of the human development ladder as previously indicated. Yet interestingly we find that the proportion spent on defense and security in

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<sup>21</sup> The Profile states, "Due to the absence of appropriate conditions (political and social stability, and the existence of reliable data) for issuing the Palestinian report on human development, it has been decided to issue a development profile as an introduction to the production of a regular report similar to that of other countries of the world," p. 5

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.* pp. 32-33

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.* p. 51

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.* p. 38

<sup>25</sup> Al-Fares, Abdul Razzaq, "Government and the poor: Who benefits from public expenditure?" in *Al-Mustaqbal Al-Arabi* 11, no. 235, November 1997, pp. 75-76



Saudi Arabia rose from 8.3% in 1979 to 31.5% in 1993, and the proportion of expenditure on social services fell from 28.8% to 19.9% for the same period.

At the same time, the percentages spent on defense and security by all the Gulf states have not decreased during the same period, except in Kuwait (from 39.6% to 29.3%) and Oman (from 74.4% to 45.7%). On the other hand, percentages of expenditure on social services fell in the United Arab Emirates from 18.4% to 4.3%, in Kuwait from 41% to 19%, in Qatar from 30.1% to 26%, and in Bahrain from 25.6% to 23.9%. The only exception is Oman where they rose from 6.3% to 25.9%.

As for the distribution of expenditure in other Arab states, we find that it differs. At one point Syria and Jordan were at the top of the list of military and security expenditure, but during the period between 1973 and 1993 it decreased (63.5% to 54.5% and 38.4% to 29.5%, respectively). Meanwhile, Syria increased its expenditure on social services and percentages rose from 18.8% to 34.8%. At the same time Yemen kept its high average of security and defense expenditure (44.6%) and doubled expenditure on social services (from 13.3% to 26.9%). At the other extreme, the Sudan's expenditure on defense and security leapt from 16.1% to 54.5% and social service percentages fell from 10.7% to 8.2%.<sup>26</sup>

All these changes in the percentages of expenditure on defense and security have their reasons, of course. Yet they expose two important elements to the Palestinians and Arabs in general. These two elements are the role of external factors and the effect that political instability has on distorting general expenditure and veering it towards defense and security issues. This form of distortion is indicative of the malfunction of developmental performance. The differences and disparities in the pace of development among the Arab states, and their inability to control decisions about development from state to state, is an indicator of their inability to take advantage of the positive elements. Ideally, this would then allow them to form a resistant front in the face of Westernization and exploitation and to deal efficiently with the conditions imposed by globalization.

There is no proper way to make a comparison between the realities of development in Palestine and developmental conditions globally or in the

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<sup>26</sup>ibid. The Arab Economic Report

Arab world. The reason is that Palestinian control over decisions concerning development and its elements is still at its most elementary stage. Palestine does not have absolute sovereignty over its natural resources or its developmental decisions. All that can be said in the case of Palestine's development is that the picture of developmental performance is a distorted one. A note must also be made of the negative external influences.

Despite this, however, one should recognize that Palestinians have taken important steps towards development. They have successfully completed the first census of their population and institutions. The census was run entirely by Palestinians and it was conducted under pressure and faced many obstacles. They have also issued the first report on poverty in Palestine (*Palestine--Poverty Report 1998*). This facilitated in establishing databases that were not available prior to the report's publishing. It is expected that the first Human Development Report on Palestine to be issued in 1999 will be able to utilize these databases to draw a more accurate picture of the reality of development in Palestine.

### *Conclusion*

I repeat what I mentioned previously concerning the fact that the Report merely makes observations without giving any explanations. The few times it does elaborate, it does not deal with the problem in depth or with its causes. That is why the cases turn into problems and, according to John Kenneth Galbraith's discussion in "On the continuing influence of affluence," the responsibility is then laid upon its victims.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, one could say that the case of dispossession has become a problem due to its disregard. And even when exploiters admit to its existence, they lay the blame upon the dispossessed. The dispossessed is a term that does not simply denote an individual or group of individuals in developing countries; it includes people all over the globe. The Report arrived at this fact when it formulated a new human poverty and deprivation indicator (HPI-2) for industrialized countries.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>v The Report pp. 42

<sup>28</sup>^ The Report p. 2

I do not exempt organizations such as the United Nations, the UNDP or other international and civil organizations.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps the clearest example is the United Nations and the contradictions in performance between its organizations. For example, the Program's performance in the field of development is in total contradiction of the West's utilization of the UN's political role (Security Council), its military role (the military intervention in Iraq) and its economic role (The World Bank and the IMF) to serve its interests and those of the US.

Dispossession, here, means usurpation without having the right to do so, in addition to the coercion of the dispossessed and taking over their resources to turn them into luxuries that serve the interests of the exploiter. Dispossession includes principles, in addition to material, legal, moral and cultural issues, and human alienation. The Report's superficial mention of the issue of alienation<sup>30</sup> coincides with its concentration on the material aspects of development, which shows how fragmented its approach is. It merely observes the results of major transformations that the world is experiencing today, in a fragmented view that does not concede to the danger of the situation. It does not analyze the appearance of the WTO within an increasing polarity between the center and the periphery, globalization, the communications revolution, and its negative or positive effects upon human beings' existence or the world's future, and especially the poor.<sup>31</sup> Ismael Sabri Abdullah comments on the World Trade Organization by stating the following:

“...We are facing a law that will control global transactions concerning goods, services and finance (GATT 1994). It will be extremely difficult for any country, no matter how big it is, or how important economically, to step outside its limitations without incurring colossal losses. In addition to this “constitution,” the WTO is considered to be a projected law for international foreign investment, which will debate the idea of an international Labor Law. Alongside this legislative authority there is a judiciary authority that will solve contentions related to the implementation of GATT 1994... It also monopolizes the judiciary actions, as this is compulsory according to the texts of the agreement. Finally, it has a

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<sup>29</sup> refer to footnote 5

<sup>30</sup> refer to The Report p. 76

<sup>31</sup> The report p. 62

police force as the agreement stipulates that there be performance inspection committees to enforce compliance with its regulations and to inspect each member of the organization once every 5 years.”<sup>32</sup>

In light of such a reality the Report concentrates on excessive consumption without giving much attention to the problems mentioned above. While it is true that excessive consumption is an increasing problem, it does not take priority over issues such as the problems of occupation and the control of international monopolies and conglomerates and their disregard of the UN resolutions related to sustainable development. However, it will be difficult to enter the next century unequipped with a list of priorities for global development, or with an insight as to human conditions in light of the new global transformations. Ignoring all these transformations or dealing with them partially or dealing with the phenomena without going into the mechanisms of causes and effects will exacerbate negative results. We will therefore be guilty in the view of future generations of neglecting these cases and transforming them into problems without suggesting any solutions. We would be dispossessing them of some of their rights before they are even born.

For all the reasons above we should be careful when debating and analyzing human development reports issued by the Program. They do not constitute a completely scientific judgement on the developmental condition in any given part of the world, nor do they portray a true picture of human reality. They neither offer a future plan, nor are they a “Quran” that cannot be desecrated. They are reports on the status of developing and industrialized countries which make limited intelligent observations. They disclose some of the problems the world faces, draw our attention to the dangers and try to predict future dangers. In short, they give an overview of the world problems and help people plan for the future in a relatively safer fashion.

It is evident that the concept of sustainable human development will be subjected to processes of renewal in light of the fast changes occurring in the world. Keeping up with the various developments in society requires a deconstruction and reformulation of existing concepts while instilling in them a new dynamic able to follow the rapid changes that are taking place. This is probably the only way to face the present challenge and those that future generations might face. It is a worthy endeavor to update the structure

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<sup>32</sup> refer to footnote 18, p365

of the Human Development Index so that the Program's efforts are more successful and that efforts can be made to build national indexes for each region that take into account its specific conditions. It is self-evident that I do not mean that actions should be taken against values within societies; on the contrary, one should respond to them. The developing countries' role remains important when debating the annual report and when criticizing or adding to it.

I find it appropriate to suggest a theoretical framework to observe development and instigate it. This framework calls for grouping countries into regional units that are joined by shared interests such as proximity and compatibility in certain aspects. This form of division should help each individual country within the regional unit look into its development conditions within the shared interests of the unit, and help it look towards a developmental reality in comparison to its neighbors. I also suggest that agreements be set up between the countries of each unit, defining the elements that will be included in the Development Index for each unit, in addition to composing an Index for each country. This would lessen the generalizations currently within the Report, and raise it to a higher and more accurate standard.

Despite political and general disagreements from which the Arab world suffers, the political and economic conditions within its states and their need for integration, let alone the geographical, historical and cultural weave that binds them, makes them eligible for being considered as one developmental unit.

My main aim in posing the questions mentioned in this paper was to reveal the disturbingly fragile situation the world is in. I also wanted to address the challenges that humanity faces, while attempting to stimulate sustainable human development. Additionally, my aim was to reveal the need for persistence in research and analysis in order to come up with a Human Development Index that is more responsive to developmental reality. Also, it is necessary to build a local development Index for each country that reflects its specific developmental nature, and allows for regular comparison. In this regard it is important to develop new methodologies for research. We need methodologies because of the differences in research capabilities between developed and non-developed countries. There is a great deal to be done in this field, and it will in turn help the Program attain sufficient credibility.

I highly appreciate the Report's role in revealing developmental realities in the world and its role in adjusting the malfunction of the development process. I hope it will be able to enhance its performance by going further than just presenting the needy with rations. Instead, it can cooperate with other international institutions, mainly those of the UN, to uproot the causes of dispossession and to stop exploiters, whether they are states, groups or individuals, from continuing their dispossession of the poor, oppressed and deprived.







# **Poverty and Gender in the context of the Human Development Report -1998**

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## *Introduction*

There is a belief from the modernist developmental perspective that economic growth and development are two different terms that have the same meaning. That is, they are considered essentially synonymous on the premise that economic growth is a fundamental element for development and that it will inevitably produce development on the societal level under all conditions.<sup>33</sup>

The 1996 Human Development Report indicated through its discussion of the complex and problematic relationship between economic growth and human development that the relation is neither mechanical nor spontaneous. The difference between them requires spontaneity and interference in their success. Since growth is spontaneous, for it to be transformed into positive results and effects, guiding policies and strategic intervention should be clearly formulated. Human development needs guidance and intervention by the government, an institution with the power to develop society, especially on the economic level. Governments also have to bear the responsibility of the extent of the success or failure of their intervention, regarding methods of utilizing their material and human capabilities. Despite the fact that the Report includes obvious statistical indicators of economic growth in some countries, it also makes evident that this growth was not followed by the development of all sectors of society in all areas of the world. Additionally, the gap between the rich and the poor has increased as a result of the lack of intervening policies to strengthen and empower marginalized social classes including the poor in general and women in particular.<sup>34</sup>

There was an attempt in the 1996 Report to discuss the reasons for the lapse in connection between economic development and human development. However, the discussion was limited to superficial comments that did not delve into the essence of the contradiction that stemmed from the world economic system and the international organizations' unsymmetrical relations with developing countries. Nonetheless, the report did mention the global imbalance, expressing cautious optimism concerning what the future might hold, and worry over present economic chasms, which could easily remove the humanitarian context due to the state of their present inequality.

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<sup>33</sup>Hussein Fathallah Sa'ad, (Altanmiyah Almustaqillah walmutatallabat walistratijiyyat walnata'ij), Beirut, The Arab Unity Study Center, 1996.

<sup>34</sup>UNDP, Human Development Report, 1996 USA, 1996

As for the 1998 Human Development Report, it has consolidated some previous conceptual issues examining them in relation to consumption and their effects on human development. As this report concentrates mainly on the issue of consumption of goods and services and its effect upon and relation to human development it examines consumption and its possible contribution towards human development or its deterioration thereof in the same way that economic growth may affect human development. Although the Report generally reflects an increase in the rate of consumption and progression in the standard of living in many countries of the world, it also reveals another side of consumption--its negative impact. An obvious example of this negative impact is the one billion people in the world who do not possess the opportunity to obtain even their most basic needs.<sup>35</sup>

This 1998 Report discusses the poverty that exists alongside an abundance of consumption, pointing out the fact that application of the concept of Human Development has not been able to lift some societies, especially those of developing countries, out of the misery of poverty. It has also been unable to guarantee that the distribution of material wealth is carried out more fairly and justly. The Report shows that 86% of the amount spent on personal consumption is spent by only 20% of the world's population. Therefore, there is great significance in analyzing the reasons obstructing the balanced advancement and development of societies. The basic question asks if it is possible to bring back the positive relationship between consumption and human development so that it can expand people's capabilities. As is indicated in the report, consumption could bring about human development if it is equitable and guarantees everyone's basic needs without discrimination, strengthens human capabilities and is taken up with common responsibility so as to not threaten the welfare of others. Consumption could also result in development if it is continuous and does not restrict future generations' options. Is it possible to achieve all of these aims amidst existing world conditions in which contradiction and inequity prevail between the processes of production and trends of consumption? Countries that produce goods they do not consume or consume goods they do not produce results in deepening inequity and structural gap between industrially advanced countries and developing ones. This will increase economic dependency on the one hand and reduce the opportunities

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<sup>35</sup>UNDP, 1998 Human Development Report.

available to marginalized social strata on the premise of class and gender on the other.

### *The World Economic System: Dependency and Hegemony*

As a result of the structural adjustment policy adopted in the 1980s to alleviate Third World debt and deal with economic stagnation, changes in economic policies took place. The most important changes were a decrease in the state's hold on the economy; the curtailing of workers' rights; decreasing government subsidies on staple goods; decreasing the role of the public sector; the privatization of public services; and decreasing government expenditure on social services, education and health. As a result there was a sharp increase in the disparity between the poor and the rich both on the international and local levels.<sup>36</sup>

This means that communities have lost the opportunity of state intervention and guidance, as spontaneous growth cannot bring about radical change. The expansion of globalization in the nineties, which both integrated and securely bonded the development of the industrialized countries at the expense of the misery of the people in developing countries has deepened the structural differences and caused deep-seated problems on the political, economic, social and cultural levels. Globalization encompasses obvious economic processes which have been implemented, including the integration of commerce, investment and fiscal markets, in addition to integrating consumer markets which has, in practice, had social, economic and cultural implications all over the developing world. This integration imposed by capitalist industrial states has reduced the opportunities and options for the development of appropriate productive structures which can serve local communities' needs.

On the social and cultural levels, unifying consumption trends and transcending nationality, within the context of globalization, has erased regional, national and cultural identity and has widened the class gap between the rich and poor. Thus, opportunities for social movement have

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<sup>36</sup>Eileen Kuttab et al., "Investing in half the population, a critical review of the World Bank plan for contingency aid to the occupied territories", in *Gender and General Policies*, working paper 2, July 1996, Women's Studies Programme – Bir Zeit University.

been reduced, as have chances for increasing consumption, which is reflected in discrimination between men and women, whereby the latter have fallen to a more peripheral and inferior status.

This discrimination and estrangement has also had an effect upon the intellectual and conceptual level of understanding and analyzing basic concepts related to development and consumption. For example, terms such as “basic” or “necessary” have varying nuances in each individual country in light of integration and adaptation to world consumption markets. The distinction between these concepts and the necessary or luxurious has become vague especially within the context of worldwide commercial advertisement. The latter has increased each family’s burden of expenses and has imposed its participation in a cycle of consumption debts, which in turn reduces chances of saving and investment. A report including a study on families in the USA, indicates that the income necessary for satisfying consumer expectations has doubled between 1986 and 1994. This first reflects a widening of the concept of basic needs, to include items which were previously categorized as “luxuries,” and it secondly reflects the consumption pressures which have imposed themselves on society in general and the family in particular. In addition, and as a result of cultural differences amongst nations, there is no unified definition of basic needs, therefore the concept may expand or be narrowed down according to technological and economic levels of development. Thereby the measure of the concept of development, which depends on meeting basic needs, requires analysis and an understanding of the cultural characteristics and development of a certain socio-economic system.

### *Poverty Amid Plentitude*

In the introduction to the report it is made evident that world consumption expenditure in both private and public sectors has expanded to reach 24 billion dollars, which is double the expenditure of 1997. In addition, it is commented that the benefits and effects of growth in consumption have been positive in general, since increased consumption is able to push standards of living higher. For example, people are now consuming more food and energy and are in greater need of education, transportation, communication and entertainment than ever before. They live longer and are blessed with greater individual freedoms as a result of their access to health services, education, and manufacturing or technological resources.

Nevertheless, the most important question is the connection of these developmental benefits to human development. As mentioned earlier, despite the fact that consumption is a basic tool of development, the relationship is not direct. Consumption can lead to human development if certain conditions are met, such as widening peoples' capabilities, whereby their lives are enriched without threatening the happiness and luxury of others and in particular that of future generations. In addition, development has to be equitable in order to guarantee the fulfillment of basic needs for everyone without discrimination, and sustainable so that it does not threaten the prospects of future generations. Can it then be said that both industrial and developing countries enjoy such qualities at present, and that the consumption glut has provided an equitable level of goods and services that cover the essential necessities of life for every social class? The answer is certainly no, and this is supported in the report through statistics indicating the opposite--there is increased poverty in both industrialized and developing countries but the extent differs in sharpness and depth. For example, the report indicates that the richest countries have more than 100 million individuals whose income is below the poverty line, 37 million unemployed workers, 100 billion homeless people and approximately 200 million at an average age of less than 60.

These numbers are extremely high considering the levels of material accumulation industrial countries have attained. The problem rests in the nature of consumption trends, which obstruct distribution of equitable progress and increase the disparity between the north and south and the rich and poor. Trends of consumption which have been applied worldwide, particularly in industrialized countries, have had negative implications on developing countries, whereby the poor in these countries bear the burden and brunt of unequal consumption. The disparity in opportunities for consumption has prevented more than 1 billion individuals from satisfying their basic consumption needs. Additionally, unplanned growth places further pressure on the environment and multiplies the dangers consumers could face. In such conditions, we find that the poor are less able to protect themselves from pollution and the depletion of natural resources. According to the 1998 Human Development Report, among the 4.4 billion of the world's population living in developing countries, three-fifths live without any form of sanitation networks; one-third without potable water; one-fifth without any hope of receiving sanitation services; and one-fifth of the children never reach the fifth grade. All of the above emphasizes the fact that the poor are unable to consume what is necessary to satisfy their most

simple basic needs. This is a truly outrageous situation especially since there is such bountiful consumption in other parts of the world.

One can conclude from all this that the wheel of development in developing countries, in its comprehensive and sustainable sense, and within the framework of globalization and the laws of dependency and inequitable consumption, propels towards adverse change and has effects that are counteractive to human development and affluence. In addition, it forfeits these states' ability to control the results of economic growth or the increase of consumption in order to achieve sustainable development.

### *Poverty Amid Limited Consumption: Consumption Trends Within Palestine*

If we adopt the analytical methodology followed within the 1998 Human Development Report when discussing Palestinian issues, we can conclude that Palestine, like other developing countries, lacks the ability and true opportunity of achieving sustainable development as a result of its particular political situation. The partial authority, almost total dependency on Israel and the state of instability can be considered as factors in the lack of basic conditions for development and progress. And all this exists in addition to the inequitable consumption trends that deprive people of their humanity.

These conditions also reflect difficulty in future planning for development of the Palestinian economy. There are various external factors and influences controlling development, and these include Jordan, Israel and foreign aid, all of which the Palestinian Authority is dependent upon at the present stage. All this has increased the complexity of conditions in Palestine and has made prediction and planning a difficult or even impossible process in some cases.

Although the political and economic situation is complicated and disconcerting, the results of the survey on family expenditure and consumption, carried out by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in 1996 and 1997, have shed light on family consumption trends in the West Bank and Gaza. This could lead to a preliminary reading of the nature and magnitude of the consumption problem and its relationship with human development. The mean monthly consumption for a family of seven



members in the West Bank and Gaza in 1997 reached \$750. Using the above-mentioned surveys, one can compare and study family adaptation practices to decreasing average income. The real expenditure of a Palestinian family in the West Bank and Gaza Strip fell from a monthly average of approximately \$828 in 1996 to \$750 in 1997, constituting a 9.4% decrease. When comparing these 1996 and 1997 monthly averages, one can note a 7% decrease in secondary expenditure, reflecting consumer adaptation to the lowered standards of income during this period.<sup>37</sup> In order to give a tangible example, I would like to refer to the results of the National Poverty Commission Report of 1998.

It appears that the poor constitute 22.5% of the Palestinian population and yet they consume only 9% of goods and services. As for the percentage of consumption by those other than the poor, it is 90.9% of goods and services although they constitute only 77.4% of the population. In the West Bank (including Jerusalem) the poor constitute 15.6% whereas they do not consume more than 6%. On the other hand, those who are affluent consume the remaining 94% even though they are only 84.4% of the population in the West Bank. As for the Gaza Strip, the percentage of consumption by the poor is 19.3% even though they represent 38.2% of the consumer force, while the percentage of those who are not poor is 61.8% and they consume 80.7% of overall consumption. Thus, one can say that average consumption of the poor for 1997 is one third that of the affluent. The ratio of the budget spent on food by consumers is high in comparison to other goods and services. Expenditure on foodstuffs constituted 47.7% of the poor consumers' budget and 27.4% of the affluent consumers' budget, compared with richer countries where expenditure does not exceed 20% on average of overall consumption.<sup>38</sup>

As for other needs, housing costs constitute 23.2%, transportation 10.4% and clothing 7.9%; these are the highest proportions within a consumer's monthly budget. Other averages of consumption are personal grooming 2%; culture 2.4%; education 2.9%; and healthcare 3.9%. It is notable that the affluent spend four times as much as the poor on healthcare, and that

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<sup>37</sup>The special UN coordinator in the occupied territories, "The Social and Economic Conditions in the West Bank and Gaza, April 1998.

<sup>38</sup>The national Team for Combating Poverty, "Palestine, Poverty Report", Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 1998.

education constitutes 2.3% of expenditure by the poor and 2.9% by the affluent.<sup>39</sup>

In addition, there are marked differences between the West Bank and Gaza, the most important being in the averages of consumption and kinds of food. The poor consumers' average consumption of food in the West Bank is 72% greater than in Gaza, and the affluent consumers' expenditure is 73% higher since the standard of living in the West Bank is much higher than that of Gaza.<sup>40</sup>

These numbers indicate that Palestinians do not have abundance for consumption like the rich countries. Thus the poor, who constitute 22.5% of the population, are unable to meet their most basic needs. And as the prices of consumer goods rise, the percentage of expenditure and consumption drops. This affects secondary (luxury) goods first and then spreads to touch on even the quality and quantity of basic consumption. Thus, how can these classes achieve any human development under such conditions of economic straits, which impose compulsory constriction on basic and secondary consumption? They also suffer from living in a context of complete subordination to the Israeli economy, which controls all the aspects of the economic process and in turn the prerequisites for sustainable development. Conditions of instability on both the security and political level, in addition to daily obstacles imposed by the Israeli occupation on the Palestinian economy, make it impossible to increase consumption or raise the standard of living.

Additionally, misery and suffering are on the rise in Palestine due to the exceptional conditions of a prevailing colonialist occupation. Thus the challenges facing sustainable development are greater than the Palestinians' capabilities and they have become unable to cope. Even the Palestinian Authority is incapable of facing these challenges, as it has political priorities, the most important being securing the success of the phases of the political project by implementing the peace agreements it signed with Israel.

### *Gender and Human Development*

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

The report explains that a notable development has occurred within societies in the past thirty years concerning distribution of the benefits of development between men and women. The report indicates that the gender gaps that existed in education and health have decreased, life expectancy for women has risen, and the percentage of girls who attend schools has also risen distinctly. However, despite these changes, women still suffer on various levels as a result of processes of development with limited horizons on the social level; thus women suffer because they are both women and poor at the same time.

Women and children are the most susceptible to the repercussions of inequitable consumption, and they are the least able to protect themselves. Women and children spend most of their time in kitchens that emit fumes and must endure the consequences. Additionally, the social and economic roles that women play in the developing countries expose them to a wide range of environmental hazards. Women in the countryside are exposed to chemical fertilizers and poisonous pesticides, and in the city to dangerous flammable chemicals in small workshops, without having adequate protection.

The Report states that despite increased democracy worldwide, women still do not have equal opportunities to partake in public life. This is evident from the statistics, which indicate that women represent only one third of the directors, 12% of the parliaments and 7% of the ministerial posts in the world. The facts above are in addition to the discrimination in trends of consumption on the level of basic needs amongst the rich and poor. It is useful to indicate here that education, healthcare and political participation are rights and need the provision of an infrastructure and democratic political systems. However, the statistics above do not show any real respect of these rights. There are many slogans concerning these issues, yet this rhetoric is not translated into practical policies that can be applied. This is a problematic issue that has been put forward by local researchers within the framework of human development. There are problems and obstacles when transforming the concept of human development into specific policies, generally of a nature connected to socio-economic and political structures responsible for specifying capabilities and opportunities available to individuals who are unequal from the beginning. In addition, the guidebook on development according to GDI, which expresses discrepancy in human achievement between men and women, shows that the levels of human

development among women are far lower than development for men worldwide.

The GDI is related to standards of empowerment connected to gender and illustrates the level of opportunities open to women for participation in political and economic life. Sweden is in the lead regarding empowerment as women there constitute 40% of the Parliament and 64% of labor in professional and technical fields. The US, however, holds eleventh place as women only hold 11% of the seats in Congress, and they constitute only 53% of the workforce in the professional and technical fields. Strangely enough, some developing countries have higher standards than the industrial states, as they place a high priority on the issue of women's equality within a society. Cuba and Costa Rica have percentages higher than those in France and Israel; similarly, percentages in China and Mexico are higher than those in Japan.

As to the average time spent at work (with or without pay), the report shows that women spend more time at work than men even in industrial countries. For example, women spend 53% of their time at work in developing countries and 51% in industrial countries. However, the sharper distinction is with peasant women as their share of the work in agriculture is far higher than that of men worldwide. Yet the problem is that women's work in agriculture is considered marginal as it is an extension of her housework in comparison to work in other sectors.

These issues are clear indicators of the continuing discrimination between men and women, and of the fact that various developmental policies have been unable to decrease the gap between men and women despite the tangible improvement in living conditions in the past thirty years.

Thus, one can conclude that economic growth is certainly not the only condition supporting human development. If a society lacks other characteristics or vital components, such as a democratic government that serves human rights and activates and supports public institutions, human development will be impossible and void of purpose or content. Development will then be restricted to only one class in society as opposed to complete social development.

### *What Should Be Done?*

In view of these dire conditions experienced by the poor in general and women in particular, the Report puts forward several propositions that claim to be able to solve the various problems caused by unequal consumption. A working agenda expressing various standpoints has been put forward, the first dealing with the choice and future viewpoint of developing countries concerning development. These countries could repeat the industrialization and free-enterprise processes, thus returning to inequitable trends and leaving a trail of pollution in their wake. Alternately, they could transcend the above mentioned trends and adopt measures that are environment friendly and that take poor people's interests into consideration. If this standpoint is the strategic choice, then various steps that do not depend on greater consumption need to be taken. In turn, consumption should be limited to an extent whereby it is more balanced (i.e. it is enough for meeting the basic needs of peripheral and socially alienated sectors).

It is relevant to indicate here that this strategic choice is not implemented on the ground in all developing countries. This is due to the autocratic nature of governing systems that do not allow any opportunity for the democratic implementation of various freedoms and for the respect of human rights, all of which constitute the core of the process towards human development. In addition, these societies have been historically connected in an organic form to the international economic system that does not provide any opportunities for disengagement. At this point I have to repeat what other researchers in the field of human development have said, and that is that one of the problems with the concept of sustainable human development is ambiguity, especially in its guidance capabilities concerning planning and setting policies on a realistic level.<sup>41</sup> For example, the Report elaborates on the various steps of arrangements that should be adopted in order to be able to implement sustainable development. These arrangements, from a practical perspective, express idealistic or romantic thoughts impossible to implement for reasons mentioned before. In reality, there is no compatibility or equality between the North and South, or between the rich and poor. This is in and of itself an obstruction to enacting radical change, affecting the nature or

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<sup>41</sup> Jamil Hilal, The Impact of the Concept of Sustainable Human Development Upon Developmental Planning and Research and Measurement Methods in the Case of Palestine, Human Development in Palestine, preliminary contributions to the debate on the concept and measurement, DSP, Bir Zeit University, June 1998.

essence of the world economic system and the conditions for its continuation and hegemony.

Focus has been placed upon the transformation into consumption trends that are more sustainable and that decrease environmental damage until sustainable development is achieved. The Report also mentions the protection and consolidation of consumer's rights in attaining the consumer goods they need as long as they are accompanied by precise information about the soundness of the products. Commercial advertisements broadcast in the media are not very precise and result in an imbalance of information due to the inability to control the quality or place where the goods are produced. In addition, there should be a more equitable distribution of burdens between countries in order to limit or even prohibit the damage done to the environment. However, application of these aims needs various arrangements in order to guarantee an adequate consumption level for all. These arrangements include the support of technological inventions which enable developing countries to transcend industrial processes that cause pollution; to treat distortions in markets caused by taxation; to do away with improper aid; to raise consciousness concerning consumption trends; and to set up alliances within civil society to protect the consumer. The final question in this context is then--who should do this work?

Finally, it is worth mentioning that such arrangements need, first of all, a democratic state, and secondly, a dynamic civil society which can play the role of an instrument of pressure upon the state in order to achieve the required change. If we discuss our situation as Palestinians in this field, it is evident that Palestinian society cannot utilize a consumption mechanism related to goods and services in order to reach the stage of sustainable human development for a number of reasons. The first being that the Palestinian Authority does not enjoy political authority, and it is obvious that the concept of human development can only be applied to independent states and societies that enjoy a certain level of security and stability. Additionally, the autocratic rule characteristic of the Palestinian system does not allow for democratic measures which guarantee various freedoms and respect for human rights, and which in effect constitute the essence of human development. A state based on a centralized authority that is not subject to any form of monitoring and accountability and which contradicts the institutions of civil society is unable to face the various challenges on the national, political or social level. As such it will be unable to achieve the necessary developments.

As in other developing countries, Palestine lacks equitable consumption trends as expressed in the National Poverty Report of 1998, rendering sustainable development difficult to achieve as long as 22.5% of the population are poor, or below the poverty line, and unable to meet their most basic needs. As long as this large proportion of the population is dehumanized and the proposed policies and plans for Palestine are not in harmony with the needs of society, it will be difficult to achieve this form of development. Palestinian society is in need of a reassessment and revision of its social, economic and political policies, so that it can avoid the fate of other developing countries that have forfeited their people's dreams and have only increased their misery and suffering.

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