

Gross national happiness in bhutan



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Question Two: GDP and HDI are at odds with GNH on the one level that highlights the immeasurable but important positives of life. As stated, GDP seeks to measure social welfare on the basis of economic prosperity in terms of the nation's success (and thus, capacity) to produce goods/services. GNH on the other hand measures just that; the holistic approach to happiness, ie, mental well being independent of materialistic objects of prosperity. The problem therefore is that GPI and HDI attempt to expand beyond materialism however they fall short.

They fail to fully cover up the internal/mental source of contentment as GNH does. If compared with the Mandala well being module, these new measures cover Physical well being, which deals with the external; but ignore reflective and subjective well being. GNH would cover up those areas in their pillars of equitable development and adherence to culture. To further elaborate on how these MEWs fall short: One example would be while measuring HDI, the constituent political/good governance is left out.

If life expectancy or knowledge is high, but a country does not have a good government that cares about it's people; it would translate to the people working in their own selfish interests and therefore, it could not be termed 'development or prosperity' in the right sense. In other words, the prosperity of the country does not include the happiness of it's citizens. Question One: GNH, the measure for well being, has several shortcomings of it's own.

Though one would say the pros outweigh the cons, the general consensus is that the traditional measure of development, the GDP, is the preferred indicator.

Development and happiness, have different meanings for different people. And therefore, for different countries. Within the country itself, are several personalities who would choose mental health over economic health. Bhutan is a small country with a simple lifestyle; a country that would proudly call itself traditional or conservative. The ruler can safely speak for the nation when he says the Bhutanese agree social progress in all aspects scores over progress mainly focused on economic/monetary aspect.

The same could not be applied to a country like the USA, where New Yorkers are more concerned with financial markets; and the higher those figures climb, the wider the grins. The same in workaholic Mumbai, where people would prefer spending 75% of their day in the office, brainstorming and completing reports to attain the national goal of best economy in the world. Over the years, the philosophy that happiness stems from having everything you want and that is satisfied through more money in the wallet, has gained precedence. Money does make the world go round.

Money is your standard measure of happiness. It can be applied to the various cultures/races within a country. And the good old measure of GDP does just that- takes into account incomes and goods produced and their utility, to measure the welfare of the economy and country. Money and it's equivalents (incomes, productivity etc) has a new meaning: it dominates the areas of health, entertainment, profession etc. To developed countries: Money (& its equivalents) IS wellbeing; for without it, and the goods it produces, one is foodless, homeless and helpless.

While exists the argument that in an already satiated society, goods and services tend to lose their appeal and thus, happiness or prosperity cannot directly tend to them.. there is always scope for improvement.. hence the already satiated country will still look for better produce and quality.. and the cycle continues.. “ the aspiration treadmill” Also, backing the statement “ individual prefer family relationships to incomes”, the higher the income, the better to support the family and satiate more desires. (which in turn satisfies individual’s need for charity) Question three:

GDP has a materialistic approach to measuring prosperity. Intangible items like voluntary community services and family relationships that people value as much as they do incomes and progress are not taken into account. So also, GDP would decrease when production decreases or depression occurs leading to unemployment.. which would mean a drop in the economy or standard of living. But the same (or worse) would occur if say, pollution reached maximum levels, or a terror attack occurred, or all of our resources reached alarmingly low levels. But GDP excludes such activities.

Wellbeing has a different meaning to different people. While to some poor categories of people, wellbeing is just being content when they make ends meet.. whether it be a few necessary food items obtained or a secondhand TV.. on the other hand you have the other wealthy, who have almost all the material articles they desire and are still not satisfied. The phrase that they you may gain the world and lose your soul is applicable here; where even the wealthiest man would not call himself prosperous if he were all alone in his home, with no family or emotion or pride.

GDP, HDI AND GNH: what it all boils down to in the end is the end outcome: the happiness that one obtains from productivity, success, achievement. The difference being GDP classifies the tangible MEANS of prosperity and GNH measures the intangible remaining constituents of happiness or satisfaction in life. QUESTION FOUR The HDI, a composite index (one that assesses more than one variable) that measures life expectancy at birth, adult literacy rate, school enrollment ratio, and GDP per capita, is indicative of a country's general social and economic well-being.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) introduced a new way of measuring development by combining indicators of life expectancy, educational attainment and income into a composite human development index, the HDI. The breakthrough for the HDI was the creation of a single statistic which was to serve as a frame of reference for both social and economic development. The HDI sets a minimum and a maximum for each dimension, called goalposts, and then shows where each country stands in relation to these goalposts, expressed as a value between 0 and 1.

The educational component of the HDI is comprised of adult literacy rates and the combined gross enrolment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary schooling, weighted to give adult literacy more significance in the statistic. Since the minimum adult literacy rate is 0% and the maximum is 100%, the literacy component of knowledge for a country where the literacy rate is 75% would be 0.75, the statistic for combined gross enrolment is calculated in an analogous manner.

The life expectancy component of the HDI is calculated using a minimum value for life expectancy of 25 years and maximum value of 85 years, so the longevity component for a country where life expectancy is 55 years would be 0.5. For the wealth component, the goalpost for minimum income is \$100 (PPP) and the maximum is \$40,000 (PPP). The HDI uses the logarithm of income, to reflect the diminishing importance of income with increasing GDP. The scores for the three HDI components are then averaged in an overall index. Basically, the HDI encompasses three major components: health, wealth and knowledge.

Therefore, HDI assumes if a country's individuals had a long life, above average incomes than the rest of the countries and attained nearly 100% literacy, the country is said to be developed. However, as previously mentioned, content is relative. From an economic perspective, if life expectancy is high, it could be assumed that the health sector is stable and environment is pure; that the standard of living is well distinguished and literacy utilizes everyone's potential. Thus, it strives to assimilate most generally-considered wellbeing areas of life.

However, what GNH also includes or strives to include in its definition of wellbeing is pride of country, tradition, freedom, oneness with nature. These would be HDI's shortcomings. Even considering all the remaining factors, there are still obstacles such as relationships, discord, corruption, that threaten to creep in and disrupt such wellbeing, these are factors that cannot be rooted out and change from individual to individual. So, a country that focuses on non materialistic, individualistic wellbeing would not be able to fully incorporate HDI.

Question six I agree with the speaker that GNH may not work out as well as planned in a diversified country. GNH, basically, attempts to classify happiness in four categories of sustainable eco development, satisfaction with governance and people's freedom, pride in nation and culture and optimum usage of knowledge through educating all. Placing these four factors in a huge diverse country, like say America for example, would be bound to encounter obstacles. Bhutanese are Buddhists who practically worship nature and their surroundings.

Americans have a myriad of party goers, atheists, rebels, homeless, adventurous, exploitative, overly nature-freaks among them. Each has their own take on 'protecting the environment' one conflicting with the other. Developed nations have a tendency to monetarily exploit/utilize anything that is possible. So while on one hand you have genuine nature lovers who will do their bit in sustainable eco development, on the other hand you have the Hollywood enthusiasts who see nature as a platform to create programs to attract viewers.

Yet another side to this is the constantly experimenting scientist who may or may not take the environment into consideration while testing a new drug on animals. While with tiny Bhutan who would utmost respect to their ruler and King, Americans or any other developed country would want their freedom. You still have the Republicans on one hand and the Democrats on the other. The glaring difference between the classes. The black and the white, the wealthy and not so fortunate. Hollywood movies still show the differences and the bloody clashes between the blacks and the whites.

While it may be easy for Bhutan to deport the Nepalese back to their country on the backing that they could not unite with bhutan's culture and hence would be a hindrance to the GNH, for their good and the nation's.. it is not such an easy task for a huge country like America to displace the original blacks. It would be classified under injustice, and most likely lead to an in-house war. Hence such a glaring disparity would make it impossible to smoothly calculate the GNH. These are but a few of the many different obstacles that lie in between a huge diverse country and the GNH.