The Basic Capabilities Index: It is not about money

The Basic Capabilities Index (BCI) was designed by Social Watch as an alternative to the ordinary United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) in order to provide a more adequate and comprehensive measure of poverty. The HDI is a composite index that attempts to measure levels of human development by combining measures of income, education, and health. However, the HDI has been criticized for its limited scope and focus on economic growth at the expense of social and environmental indicators.

Social Watch developed the BCI as a way to provide a more comprehensive measure of poverty that takes into account a wider range of social indicators. The BCI is based on a set of basic capabilities that are essential for human well-being, such as access to education, health care, and a safe and healthy environment.

The BCI assigns equal weight to three basic capabilities: 1) the existence of a national education system that guarantees all children the right to education at all levels, 2) the capability to be free from hunger, and 3) the capability to be healthy and to be protected from premature death. The index is calculated as the average of the three basic capabilities, which are then expressed in percentages. The maximum value is 100 when all women giving birth are attended by skilled health personnel, 100% of children are enrolled in education and they all attain basic education, and all health indicators are expressed as 100.

The BCI is a simple, easy-to-use instrument that is flexible and adaptable to different contexts. It is based on data that are already available in most countries, and it can be used to monitor progress over time. The BCI is also a useful tool for identifying the most vulnerable populations and for targeting interventions to reduce poverty and improve social indicators.

The BCI is a useful tool for policymakers and practitioners who want to improve the lives of the poor. It is a way to measure progress in poverty reduction and to monitor the impact of policies and programs. The BCI is a tool for social inclusion and for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

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