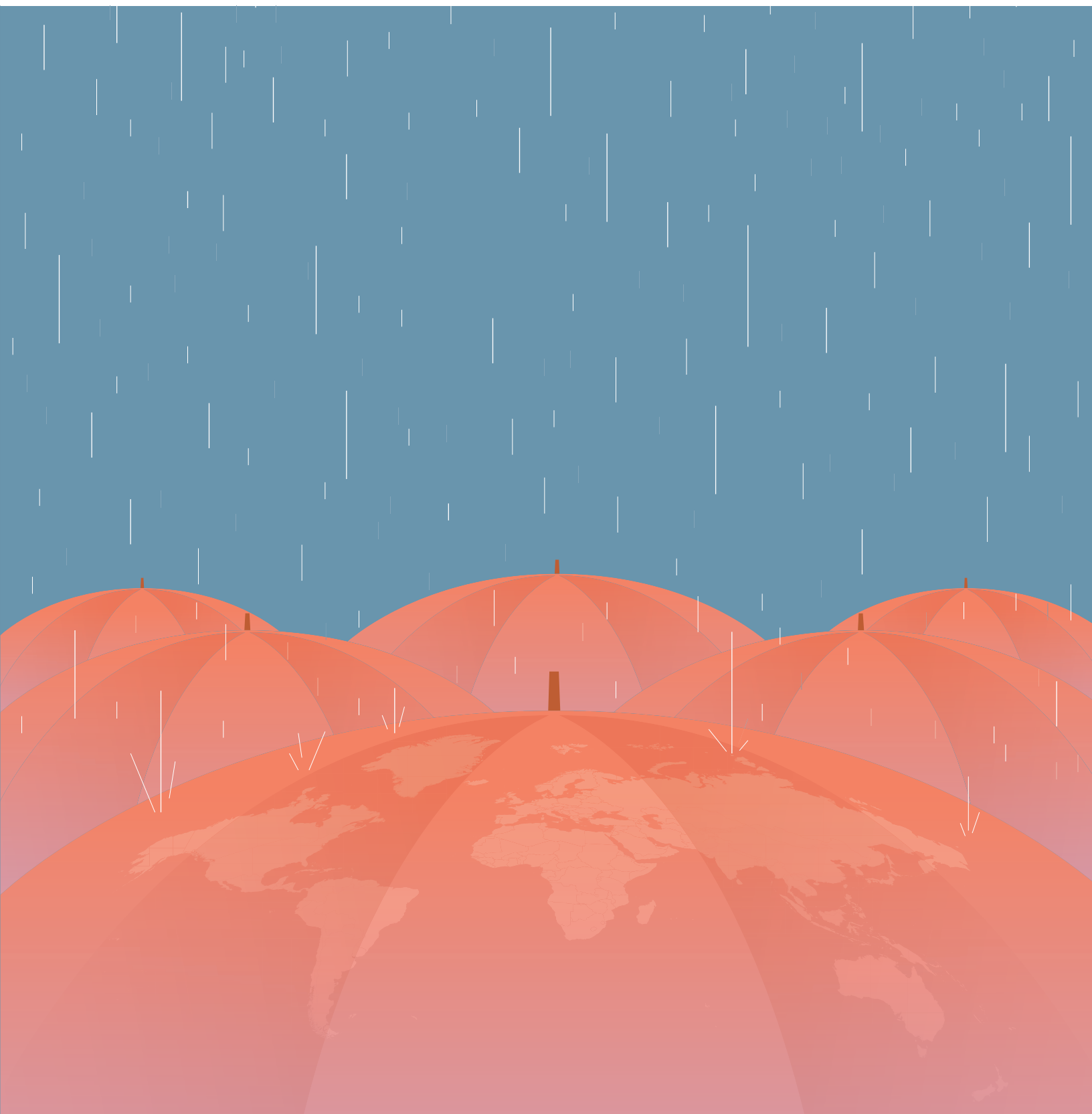
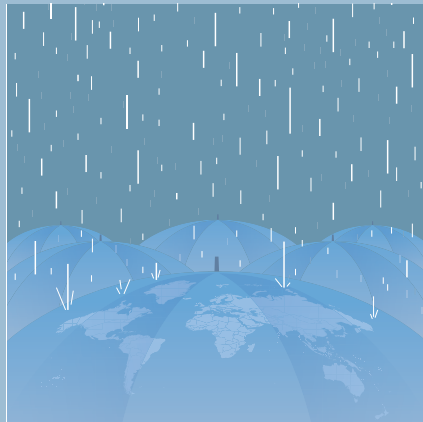


Human Development Report 2014



Sustaining Human Progress:
Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience





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Human Development Report 2014

Sustaining Human Progress:
Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience



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Resilient nations.*

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Foreword

The 2014 Human Development Report—*Sustaining Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience*—looks at two concepts which are both interconnected and immensely important to securing human development progress.

Since the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) first global *Human Development Report (HDR)* in 1990, most countries have registered significant human development. This year's Report shows that overall global trends are positive and that progress is continuing. Yet, lives are being lost, and livelihoods and development undermined, by natural or human-induced disasters and crises.

However, these setbacks are not inevitable. While every society is vulnerable to risk, some suffer far less harm and recover more quickly than others when adversity strikes. This Report asks why that is and, for the first time in a global *HDR*, considers vulnerability and resilience through a human development lens.

Much of the existing research on vulnerability has considered people's exposure to particular risks and is often sector-specific. This Report takes a different and more holistic approach. It considers the factors which contribute to risks to human development and then discusses the ways in which resilience to a broad group of evolving risks could be strengthened.

This approach is particularly important in our interconnected world. While globalization has brought benefits to many, it has also given rise to new concerns, manifest at times as local reactions to the spillover effects of events far away. Preparing citizens for a less vulnerable future means strengthening the intrinsic resilience of communities and countries. This Report lays the groundwork for doing that.

In line with the human development paradigm, this Report takes a people-centred approach. It pays particular attention to disparities between and within countries. It identifies the 'structurally vulnerable' groups of people who are more vulnerable than others by virtue of their history or of their unequal treatment by the rest of society. These vulnerabilities have

often evolved and persisted over long periods of time and may be associated with gender, ethnicity, indigeneity or geographic location—to name just a few factors. Many of the most vulnerable people and groups face numerous and overlapping constraints on their ability to cope with setbacks. For example, those who are poor and also from a minority group, or are female and have disabilities, face multiple barriers which can negatively reinforce each other.

The Report considers the way in which vulnerabilities change during our lives—by taking a 'life cycle approach'. Unlike more static models, this analysis suggests that children, adolescents and the elderly each face different sets of risks which require targeted responses. Some periods of life are identified as particularly important: for example, the first 1,000 days of a child's life or the transition from school to work or from work to retirement. Setbacks at these points can be particularly difficult to overcome and may have prolonged impacts.

Based on analysis of the available evidence, this Report makes a number of important recommendations for achieving a world which addresses vulnerabilities and builds resilience to future shocks. It calls for universal access to basic social services, especially health and education; stronger social protection, including unemployment insurance and pensions; and a commitment to full employment, recognizing that the value of employment extends far beyond the income it generates. It examines the importance of responsive and fair institutions and increased social cohesion for building community-level resilience and for reducing the potential for conflict to break out.

The Report recognizes that no matter how effective policies are in reducing inherent vulnerabilities, crises will continue to occur with potentially destructive consequences. Building capacities for disaster preparedness and recovery, which enable communities to better weather—and recover from—shocks, is vital. At the global level, recognizing that risks which are transborder in nature require collective action, the Report calls for global commitments and better international governance.

These recommendations are both important and timely. As UN Member States prepare to conclude negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda and launch a set of sustainable development goals, the evidence collected and analysed in this Report, and the human development perspective on which it is based, are particularly valuable. Eradicating poverty, for example, will be a central objective of the new agenda. But, as this Report argues, if people remain at risk of slipping back into poverty because of structural factors and persistent vulnerabilities, development progress will remain precarious. The eradication of poverty is not just about ‘getting to zero’—it is also about staying there.

Achieving UNDP’s vision to help countries achieve the simultaneous eradication of poverty and significant reduction of inequalities and exclusion and to promote human and sustainable development, requires a deep appreciation

of the concepts of vulnerability and resilience. Unless and until vulnerabilities are addressed effectively, and all people enjoy the opportunity to share in human development progress, development advances will be neither equitable nor sustainable.

This Report aims to help decisionmakers and other development actors lock in development gains through policies which reduce vulnerability and build resilience. I recommend it to all who wish to see sustained development progress, especially for the most vulnerable people in our world.



Helen Clark
Administrator
United Nations Development Programme

Acknowledgements

The 2014 *Human Development Report* is the product of a collective effort by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report Office (HDRO) and many valued external advisors and contributors. However, the findings, analysis and policy recommendations of this Report, as with previous Reports, are those of the authors alone and do not represent the official viewpoint of UNDP, nor that of its Executive Board. The UN General Assembly has officially recognized the *Human Development Report* as “an independent intellectual exercise” that has become “an important tool for raising awareness about human development around the world.”¹

We are pleased that H.E. Ms. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia, Bill Gates, Stephen Hawking, James Heckman, Rajendra Pachauri, Juan Somavia, Joseph Stiglitz and M.S. Swaminathan have made special contributions to the Report. We are also most grateful to the authors of papers commissioned for this 2014 Report: Connie Bayudan; Des Gasper and Oscar Gomez; Andrew Fischer; Thomas Hale; Khalil Hamdani; Abby Hardgrove, Kirrilly Pells, Jo Boyden and Paul Dornan; Naila Kabeer; Inge Kaul; William Kinsey; Samir KC, Wolfgang Lutz, Elke Loichinger, Raya Muttarak and Erich Striessnig; Rehman Sobhan; Adam Rose; Till von Wachter; Mary E. Young; and Ashgar Zaidi.

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Khalid Malik

Director

Human Development Report Office

Notes

1 UN Resolution 57/264, 30 January 2003.

2 Participants are listed and acknowledged at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2014-report/consultations>.

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**“Human progress is neither
automatic nor inevitable . . .”**

Martin Luther King, Jr.