FIRST AMERICAN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT INTRODUCES NEW MEASUREMENT OF AMERICANS’ WELL-BEING
American Human Development Index Provides a Snapshot of America by State and Congressional Districts and Shows the American Dream In Peril


“The “Measure of America” reveals huge gaps among some groups in our country to access opportunity and reach their potential,” said Sarah Burd-Sharps, co-author of the book. “Some Americans are living anywhere from 30 to 50 years behind others when it comes to issues we all care about: health, education and standard of living. For example, the state human development index shows that people in last-ranked Mississippi are living 30 years behind those in first-ranked Connecticut.”

Using U.S. government statistics on longevity, educational attainment and enrollment, and earnings, the report reveals where America is today and sets a benchmark against which we will be able to assess where we are tomorrow. Unlike single measurements of health, education or income, the American Human Development Index combines these factors into one measurement that more accurately reflects Americans’ well-being. The report identifies which parts of the country are moving forward and which are stalled or even falling behind.

“This is not a report about one group of Americans or another; it is about all of us,” said Kristen Lewis, co-author of the report. “By ranking the fifty states, the 436 congressional districts, and the major racial and ethnic groups, the American Human Development Index allows everyone to see where his or her community fits in terms of access to opportunity and standard of living.”

The American Human Development Report 2008-2009 shows that although America is one of the richest nations in the world, it is woefully behind when it comes to providing opportunity and choices to all Americans to build a better life. Following are just a few of the many findings of the report:

• In Texas’ 29th Congressional District, the percentage of the adult population with less than a high school degree is at about the level of the U.S. average in the early 1970s.
• Among the nation’s 436 congressional districts, New York’s 14th District (in Manhattan) ranks first and California’s 20th District (around Fresno) ranks last; the average resident of New York’s 14th District earns more than three times as much as the average California’s 20th District resident.
• Nationally, Asian males have the highest human development index score and African American males the lowest, with a staggering 50-year gap between the two groups.
• Despite the fact that the United States spends roughly $5.2 billion every day on health care, more per capita than any other nation in the world, Americans live shorter lives than citizens of every Western European and Nordic country except for one.

“The information found in this report will prove invaluable to the philanthropic community when looking for ways to improve the lives of people living with reduced opportunities,” said Ed Cain, vice president for
programs of The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. “American philanthropies can use this report to identify where the needs exist and to guide their investments in programs that address those needs by providing better access to healthcare, education and jobs.”

Eighteen years after the first United Nations Human Development Report was published, more than 140 countries around the world have replicated the human development index for their country to better understand what is inhibiting human development and to use the data to develop policies that will improve their citizen’s standard of living. “The human development index is such an accepted standard that in Brazil, for example, the human development index of each team’s country was flashed on the screen during televised World Cup soccer matches,” said Eduardo Martins, co-author of the report.

“The American Human Development Index is unique because it reveals the interlocking factors that create or deny opportunity and determine life chances,” said Raymond C. Offenheiser, president of Oxfam America. “The analysis is particularly revealing in places like the Gulf Coast region, where we work with 34 regional organizations. The report clearly illustrates the conditions residents were struggling with even prior to the hurricanes of 2005 – limited access to education, lower incomes, and shorter lives – and argues for a comprehensive solution for recovery.”

The report also includes key social, economic, political, environmental, housing, transportation and military data distilled from a vast array of primary sources not found together anywhere else. Finally, the report describes successful policies in America and other wealthy nations, allowing policy makers to draw practical lessons for policy action locally or nationally.

“The American Human Development Index offers a clear and balanced measure of how well our public and private policies are meeting the needs of Americans,” said Darren Walker, vice president, Foundation Initiatives, The Rockefeller Foundation. “The data in this report can be used to build on past policy successes and to create opportunities that serve a new generation of Americans.”

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**Note to Editors:**

Go to [www.measureofamerica.org](http://www.measureofamerica.org) for state news releases, U.S. American Human Development Index by state and Congressional districts, U.S. maps by state and Congressional districts for health, education and income indices, fact sheets, and video sound bites from co-authors and other key spokespersons and the Well-O-Meter, a tool to determine your personal human development index.