

Press Release



**South African
Institute of
Race Relations**

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South Africa's Human Development Index on the rise

After declining for over a decade, South Africa's Human Development Index (HDI) has started to rise again, says the South African Institute of Race Relations.

In 1980, South Africa's HDI was 0.658. It rose steadily to 0.698 in 1990. However, by 2005, it had decreased to 0.678, which was worse than its level in 1985. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) data showed that in 2007, South Africa's HDI rose again to 0.683. This is according to the annual 2009/10 *South Africa Survey*, published by the Institute in Johannesburg this week. Updated figures from the UNDP show that the upward trend continued into 2010.

The HDI is an index that combines measurements of life expectancy, literacy, educational attainment, and gross domestic product (GDP) per capita for countries worldwide. It is used as a standard means of measuring development, as well as to determine whether a country is developed, developing, or underdeveloped.

Thuthukani Ndebele, a researcher at the Institute, said 'The reason for South Africa's HDI decline between 1990 and 2005 was a dramatic decline in life expectancy, as a result of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.'

Data from Statistics South Africa shows that South Africa's life expectancy for men increased between 2005 and 2007 from 50.3 years to 51.4 years. For women the increase was from 52.6 years in 2005 to 53.4 years in 2007.

'This increase in life expectancy between 2005 and 2007 accounts for the increase in South Africa's HDI,' Ndebele said.

'By 2010, life expectancy for men was 53.3 years, and for women it was 55.2 years. This shows the increasingly positive effect of government's roll-out of anti-retroviral treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS.'

'This upward trend looks set to continue, which means that South Africa should expect further rises in its HDI, barring any negative changes in educational attainment or GDP per capita. This reflects increasing levels of human development in the country.'

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