

## IB GLOBAL POLITICS: MEASURING DEVELOPMENT

Submitted by Kevin Nielsen, 2025, while serving as IB Diploma Coordinator at British School of Manila, the Philippines



### LEARNING PLAN OVERVIEW

|                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Subject(s)</b>            | Humanities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Grade Level (s)</b>       | High School (ages 14-18)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Systems Tool(s)</b>       | Sustainability Compass                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Purpose of Using Tool</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical Thinking</li> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Summary</b>               | Students will use the Sustainability Compass to look at what other factors can be used to measure development. Historically, development has been measured economically using GDP or another similar indicator. The Sustainability Compass will help students look at factors that affect wellbeing and the environment. |

### Learning Objectives

#### Knowledge and Understanding

1. Explain the concept of human development and how it is measured using composite indices such as the Human Development Index (HDI).
2. Identify and describe the key components (health, education, and income) and indicators (e.g., life expectancy, mean years of schooling, GNI per capita) used in the HDI.
3. Analyze the limitations and criticisms of the HDI as a measure of development.
4. Examine alternative indices of development (e.g., Gender Inequality Index, Multidimensional Poverty Index, Happy Planet Index) and the rationale for their indicators.
5. Understand the Sustainability Compass framework (Nature, Economy, Society, and Wellbeing) and how it can be used to guide holistic thinking about development.

#### Skills

1. Apply the Sustainability Compass to brainstorm indicators that address all aspects of sustainable development (Nature, Economy, Society, Wellbeing).
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of different indicators in measuring human development, considering factors such as validity, reliability, and cultural relevance.

3. Select appropriate indicators and justify their inclusion in a new composite index based on critical analysis of development priorities.
4. Design a composite development index, clearly defining each aspect and corresponding indicators, and explain how they collectively provide a more comprehensive and sustainable measure of human development.

**Communication**

1. Develop a persuasive argument to advocate for the use of your composite index in a formal presentation to a specific audience (the UNDP).
2. Use appropriate presentation tools and techniques to effectively communicate complex ideas in an engaging and clear 7-10 minute recorded presentation.
3. Demonstrate teamwork and collaboration, where appropriate, to research, brainstorm (using the Sustainability Compass), and refine your development index and presentation.

**Material and Settings**

- Markers
- Butcher paper
- Sustainability Compass
- Internet access

**Learning Context**

This lesson comes as students have been learning about ways in which society measures development.

This included looking at GNP/GDP and HDI. We also looked at more recent examples like the Happy Planet Index. This lesson is a culmination of these ideas.

**Purpose of Using the Systems Thinking Tools**

The Sustainability Compass helps us to visually see the different aspects of sustainability. This helps as a brainstorming tool to allow students to look at development holistically.

**Impact on Participant Learning**

Using a combination of the Sustainability Compass and Gapminder (for the data), students were able to look at different aspects and indicators and have a cogent discussion about how to best represent development. It led to further critical thinking skills.

## Learning Plan Step-by-step Description

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) compiles the [Human Development Index \(HDI\)](#) of 191 nations in the annual Human Development Report. The index considers aspects such as health, education, and income to provide a measure of human development that is comparable between countries and over time.

While the HDI is a significant improvement on how development used to be measured (using indicators such as GDP), criticisms still exist that it misses or undervalues important aspects of development—such as sustainability, equity, and wellbeing.

Now, the UNDP has asked you, as a development consultant, to create a new composite development index that better captures the full picture of development. Your goal is to design an index that reflects not just economic growth, but also sustainability, social wellbeing, and long-term development priorities.

### Task Overview

You will create a composite index of development that you believe is a better measure than the current HDI.

You can look at other indices we studied for inspiration (e.g., Gender Inequality Index, Happy Planet Index, Multidimensional Poverty Index), but your index and rationale should be original.

You will use the Sustainability Compass model (Nature, Economy, Society, Wellbeing) to guide your brainstorming and indicator selection. This ensures your index addresses the broader, interconnected factors that influence sustainable development.

### Sustainability Compass Brainstorming

Before you design your index, you will brainstorm potential development aspects and indicators under each compass point:

- **Nature (N):** How does your index account for environmental sustainability, resource management, or ecological health? (e.g., carbon footprint, biodiversity index, air and water quality)
- **Economy (E):** How does it measure inclusive and sustainable economic growth? (e.g., employment quality, equitable income distribution, access to financial services)
- **Society (S):** How does it capture social cohesion, education, governance, and justice? (e.g., literacy rates, gender equality, political participation, crime rates)
- **Wellbeing (W):** How does it reflect people's health, happiness, and quality of life? (e.g., life satisfaction surveys, mental health access, life expectancy)

Use the Sustainability Compass as a brainstorming tool to ensure your index reflects the interconnected dimensions of sustainable human development.

**Your Role & Task**

**Goal:** To create a composite index of development that is arguably better than the HDI.

**Role:** You are acting as a development consultant. You will advocate for your proposed development aspects and indicators.

**Audience:** The top development advisors for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

**Situation:** You are pitching your composite measurement to the UNDP alongside rival consultants who are competing for the contract.

**Product:** A 7-10 minute recorded presentation to the UN advisory team explaining and justifying your composite index.

**Standard:** See rubric for performance expectations.

**What You Need to Do**

1. Research indicators using credible sources such as Gapminder, [Human Development Reports](#), and the World Bank database.
2. Brainstorm aspects and indicators using the Sustainability Compass.
3. Select at least four key aspects for your index (you may align them with the compass points or justify a different framework).
4. Choose indicators for each aspect that are reliable, valid, and globally comparable.
5. Justify why each indicator is important and how it improves upon the current HDI.
6. Explain how your composite index provides a more comprehensive and sustainable measure of development.
7. Create a visual representation (diagram, infographic, chart, etc.) to show the structure of your index.
8. Record your presentation using software you are comfortable with (e.g., PowerPoint + Voiceover, Loom, Flip).

**Development Aspect & Indicator Examples**

- Aspect: Education  
Indicator: Literacy rate, gender parity in schooling, graduation rates.
- Aspect: Environment (Nature)  
Indicator: Carbon emissions per capita, renewable energy use, biodiversity score.
- Aspect: Wellbeing  
Indicator: Life expectancy, mental health index, happiness index.

**Why Use the Sustainability Compass?**

- To think holistically about what "development" really means.

- To ensure you are considering Nature, Economy, Society, and Wellbeing in an integrated way.
- To design an index that promotes sustainability, equity, and long-term human flourishing.

## Reflection: Plusses

I like this as a performance task. In the IB, we sometimes get bogged down in doing past papers to measure student understanding. During our student-led conferences, a number of students discussed this particular activity as memorable as helping them retain an understanding of the prescribed material.

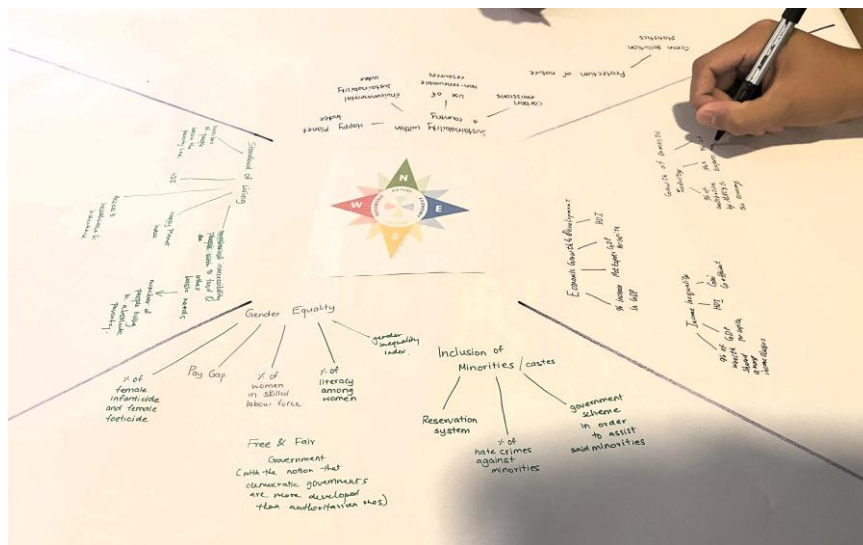
## Areas for Improvement

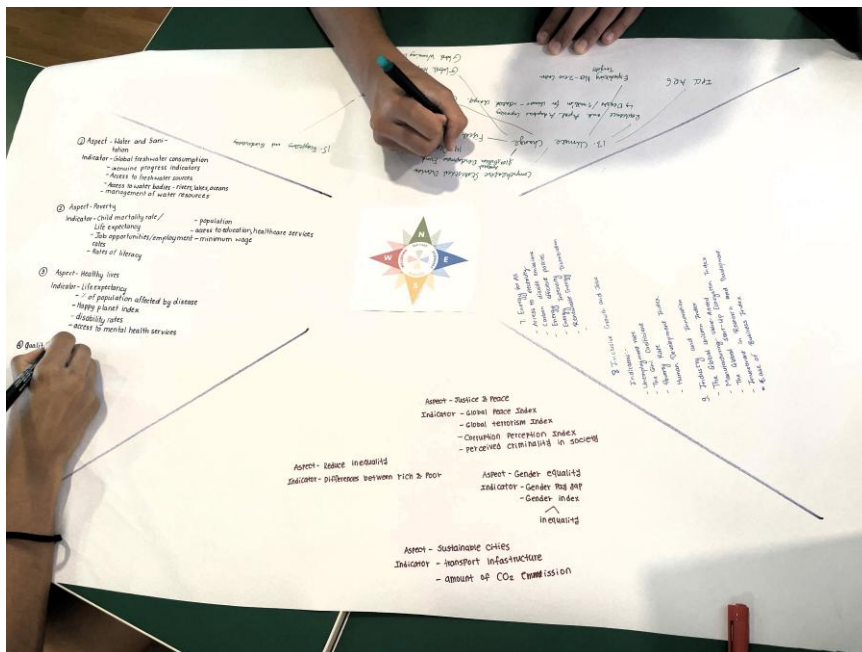
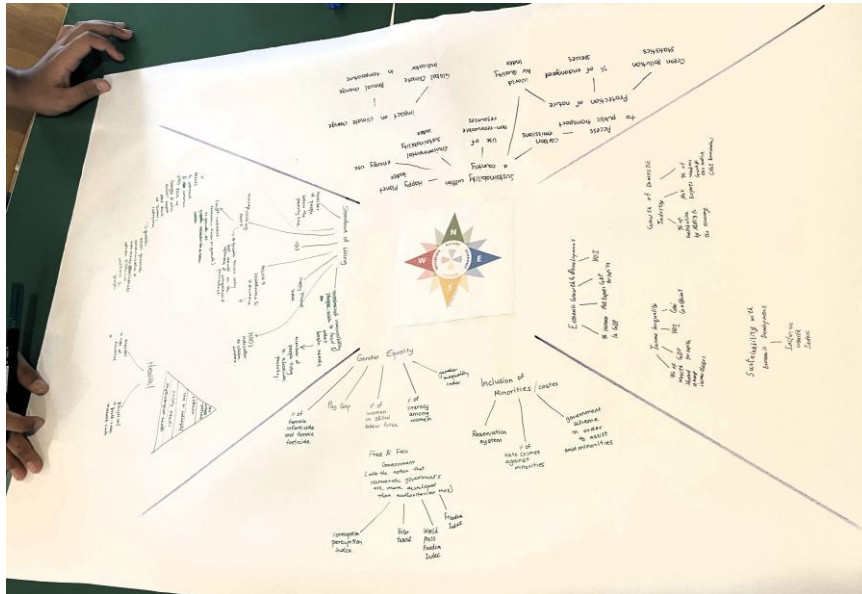
I think that the Gapminder data is useful but it is a bit overwhelming. I think that curating it to help the students focus could be a more efficient use of time.

## EVIDENCE

Summative Rubric:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WMFF9shYVM\\_6AKNzYuj2o9QDbUTJld9P/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WMFF9shYVM_6AKNzYuj2o9QDbUTJld9P/view?usp=sharing)





How do we best measure development?

① Brainstorm - Aspects - Gender Equality

Indicators - % women in legislature

Gender pay gap

Partnership