

Dear Colleague,

Welcome to the November 2012 issue of the “Indices of Social Development” (ISD) newsletter. This newsletter informs you about activities, events and data updates. Your comments and suggestions are always welcome.

- **ISD Working Paper Series:**

1. Two new working papers are published on the ISD website with new ISSN (International Standard Serial Number):

“[Social Development and Happiness in Nations](#)” by Ruut Veenhoven. The paper was presented at the conference ‘Taking stock: Measuring social development’ in December 2011, at the International Institute of Social Studies. In this paper the common assumption that social development will add to human happiness is checked in an analysis of 141 contemporary nations. Social development is measured using five Indices of Social Development: a) civic activism, b) participation voluntary associations, c) harmony among groups, d) harmony among individuals and d) gender-equality. Average happiness in nations is measured using responses to survey questions on life satisfaction, available in the World Database of Happiness.

“[Methodology of the Indices of Social Development](#)” by Roberto Foa and Jeffery C. Tanner. This paper discusses challenges faced in the design of composite indices, and suggests the method known as matching percentiles as a solution to the problem of how to aggregate social institutional data. We produce a set of indices measuring the health of five dimensions of social development: civic activism, clubs and associations, inter-group cohesion, interpersonal safety and trust, and gender equity. We then conduct a series of diagnostic tests which demonstrate the robustness of the new measures, and assess their degree of construct validity.

- ISD analysis of development aid and outcomes “[Civil Society, Aid, and Development: a Cross-Country Analysis](#)” carried out by Irene van Staveren and Ellen Webbink for IOB (Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands) was presented at Ministry of Foreign Affairs on November 13, 2012.

- ISD trends were presented in a roundtable on new a UNDP (United Nations Development Program) report on democratic governance, on November 15, 2012 at the ISS. Irene van Staveren is doing a background paper for this report, based on trends in some of the indices of the database. This year UNDP is preparing the first Democratic Governance Global Report, which will analyze the state of democratic governance in different countries and regions of the world, in the light of the global, regional and national shifts in economic, social and political relations. This workshop in The Hague is one of a range of regional UNDP consultations to discuss the content of the report. In this workshop the central issues were the growing inequalities, insecurities and civic activism that characterize the current state of affairs in the world. The ISD database is used in the report.
- ISD would like to know your opinion about the Indices. Please send your comments or (working) papers to isd@iss.nl.

Best wishes,
The Indices of Social Development Team.

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