

Is there "Desarrollo Sostenible" or "Desarrollo Sustentable" in the South of Mexico?

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BUT WHAT IS DEVELOPMENT?

The first thing to note is that development brings together a series of economic, social, cultural, political and technological activities that seek greater well-being and quality of life for the population of the entire planet. It is so important that, in addition to being part of human rights, it demands the fulfillment of all other human rights, basic freedoms, and contributes to all people favoring development and enjoying it, as stated in the Declaration on the Right to Development of the United Nations of 1986. In this sense, Amartya Sen (2000), Nobel Prize in Economics, points out that development means the increase of people's freedoms, which forces the elimination of poverty and guarantees economic opportunities, public services, and civil and political rights.

WHAT IS DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE?

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development published the document *Our Common Future*, known as the Brundtland report, in which the concept of sustainable development was coined in English, which in Latin America was interchangeably translated as *desarrollo sostenible* and *desarrollo sustentable*. This led to a debate on which of the two expressions associated with development, *sostenible* and *sustentable*, is more appropriate. For example, in Mexico, almost without exception, *desarrollo sustentable* is used and in the rest of Latin America the use of *desarrollo sostenible* is more frequent. This discussion could have been avoided if the term lasting development (*desarrollo duradero*) had been adopted, which is the one used by the United Nations (1987) in the Spanish version of the aforementioned document. This means that development must meet the needs of the present without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own.

Subsequently, in 1992, the United Nations Assembly held the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, where Agenda 21 was approved, which considers sustainable development as a strategy to address the global environmental crisis. Following this event, the World Summits on Sustainable Development were held in Johannesburg (2002), Rio de Janeiro (2012) (named Rio+20), and New York (2015). The renowned Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that make up the 2030 Agenda were presented in the last Summit; it receives its name because, no later than that year, the 17 SDGs must be

achieved (see Figure 1). According to the United Nations (2015), sustainable development must be driven by three factors: economic, social, and environmental, among these, democracy, good governance, the rule of law, inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection, and the eradication of poverty and hunger stand out as central issues.



Note. United Nations (UN). Source: <https://www.cepal.org/es/temas/agenda-2030-desarrollo-sostenible/objetivos-desarrollo-sostenible-ods>

Figure 1. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

BUT WHAT IS DEVELOPMENT SUSTENTABLE?

Although, as mentioned above, the terms *desarrollo sostenible* and *desarrollo sustentable* are often used synonymously, conceptually there are differences in nuance between them. As indicated by Rivera and other authors in 2017, *desarrollo sostenible* is defined in the aforementioned Brundtland report, while *sustentable* constitutes a deontology that transcends the economic, since it promotes values such as solidarity, reciprocity, and the common good. Various research indicates that the objective of *desarrollo sostenible* is to balance the social, economic, and environmental components (Figure 2), while the goal of *desarrollo sustentable* is to generate a higher quality of life and the progress of people. Therefore, the components of sustainability are the environment, the economy, ethics, governance, democracy, citizen participation, access to public services such as health and education, cultural diversity and the identity of peoples.

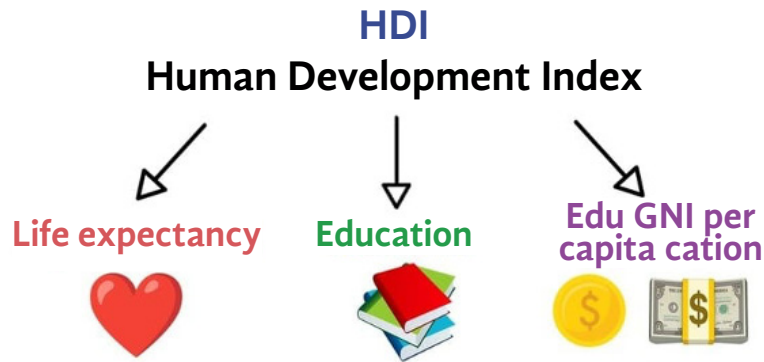


Note: Human Development Index Concept, Measurement, and Limitations. Source: Catorce6 <https://www.catorce6.com/384-guia-del-consumidor/17726-que-es-desarrollo-sostenible>

Figure 2. Factors of sustainable development

A REVIEW OF THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX (HDI) ON THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN BORDERS

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) designed a method to measure and understand the development of a country, region or municipality, called the Human Development Index (HDI), which is integrated with three sub-indices referring to aspects vital to the well-being of society: health, education, and income (the economy). Therefore, this approach is closely related to the 2030 Agenda and sustainable development. The health dimension or sub-index is measured by life expectancy at birth, education by expected years of schooling and average years of schooling, and income by gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (see Figure 3). HDI measurements are grouped into four categories. Low level: when the grade is less than 0.55, medium level: between 0.55 and 0.7, high level: between 0.7 and 0.8, and very high level: when it is greater than 0.8.



Note: Human Development Index Concept, Measurement, and Limitations. Source: bit.ly/3XDDek3

Figure 3. Human Development Index

As can be seen in Tables 1 and 2, the HDI scores of the states that make up the border with the United States exceed those of the states that make up the southern border of Mexico. In fact, the rating of Tamaulipas, which is the lowest of the northern states, is the same as that of Quintana Roo, the highest of those in the south. Five border states have high HDI levels and one, Nuevo León, very high, with an average score of 0.785 and, in addition, four of them are among the top ten in the country. In contrast, three southern border states have a high HDI and one has a medium level, with an average score of 0.730. Likewise, two of these states, Tabasco and Chiapas, are among the ten most laggard in the country. Of the latter, the case of Chiapas stands out, which, despite its great social, cultural, and environmental wealth, it is unjustifiable that it occupies the country's last position in HDI.

Table 1
2020 HDI of Northern Border States

State	HDI 2020	Category	National Place
Nuevo León	0.803	Very high	2
Baja California	0.793	High	3
Coahuila	0.789	High	6
Sonora	0.782	High	9
Chihuahua	0.771	High	13
Tamaulipas	0.769	High	14

Note. PNUD (2022)

Table 2
2020 HDI of Southern Border States

State	HDI 2020	Category	National Place
Quintana Roo	0.769	High	15
Campeche	0.753	High	19
Tabasco	0.748	High	22
Chiapas	0.648	Medium	32

Note. PNUD (2022).

A NOTE ON BIODIVERSITY IN MEXICO

As pointed out by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources in 2014, Mexico's biological diversity is one of the most remarkable in the world and that wealth allows it to be classified, along with nations such as Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Indonesia, and China, as a "megadiverse" country. In addition, the biodiversity of our country also stands out for its high degree of endemism, that is, the existence of species that live only in Mexico, with Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Veracruz being the states with the greatest biological diversity. In this regard, Martínez-Meyer et al. (2014) report that 94,112 species live in Mexico, equivalent to 8.5% of the world, with an endemism of almost 40%. In addition, they add that in our country there is an abundance of terrestrial, coastal, and marine ecosystems (Figure 4). Regarding water, in 2012 the southern border region had almost 164 km³ per year, while the Baja California peninsula and the Valley of Mexico had only 4.99 km³ and 3.47 km³, respectively.



Note. iSTOCKbit.ly/439xwYg

Figure 4. Biodiversity Example in Mexico

FOR SOUTHERN MEXICO, DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE AND DESARROLLO SUSTENTABLE!

The information that has been presented shows that it is a priority to implement public policies, programs, and projects of a diverse nature that promote greater well-being and quality of life for the inhabitants of the southern states of Mexico. In addition, these activities must incorporate the approaches of desarrollo sostenible and desarrollo sustentable as a hallmark. The first is to promote balanced economic, social, and environmental development that, among other things, allows states such as Chiapas to address the problem of poverty and an inappropriate HDI. As a complement, the sustainable development model is important to promote, in addition, principles such as social solidarity, democracy, access to better public services and respect for cultural diversity, so present in southern Mexico. Finally, we must remember that development is a right of all people that must be fulfilled.

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