

THE 'MISSING DIMENSIONS' OF POVERTY DATA: A PROPOSAL FOR INTERNATIONALLY-COMPARABLE INDICATORS

MOTIVATION

If the objective of human development is to expand the freedoms that people value and have reason to value, enabling them to live more fulfilled lives and to flourish, then data on people's freedoms is needed to guide and evaluate development actions. A critical bottleneck is a dearth of high-quality internationally comparable indicators of key capabilities.

OBJECTIVE

We seek to promote collection and analysis of data on several 'missing dimensions' of poverty that appear important in the experiences of deprived people, but have been largely overlooked to date in large-scale quantitative work on poverty and human development. We have designed five short, 8-10 minute modules that can be integrated into national household surveys.

To find out more about this research and obtain the survey modules and papers on each dimension, visit: www.ophi.org.uk

THE DIMENSIONS

The specific dimensions we have identified include:

- ❖ **Employment**, including both formal and informal employment, with particular attention to the quality of employment (Lugo 2007);
- ❖ **Agency**, or empowerment: the ability to advance goals that one values and has reason to value (Ibrahim and Alkire 2007);
- ❖ **Physical safety**, focusing on security from violence to property and person, as well as perceptions of violence (Diprose 2007); and
- ❖ **The ability to go about without shame**, to emphasize the importance of dignity, respect and freedom from humiliation (Zavaleta 2007).

We have also designed a module that may not necessarily be considered a dimension of poverty, but for which more internationally-comparable data are needed:

- ❖ **Psychological and subjective wellbeing**, to emphasize meaning, satisfaction and their determinants (Samman 2007).



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CRITERIA

The following criteria were used to identify suitable indicators for inclusion in individual or household surveys:

- ❖ The indicators need to be *internationally comparable*. This is particularly important given the dearth of comparable indicators on the 'missing dimensions'.
- ❖ They should assess not only the instrumental but also the *intrinsic* aspects of the dimensions we propose.
- ❖ They must enable identification of *changes* in the missing dimensions over time.
- ❖ They should draw on the *experience of particular indicators* to date; notably how frequently these indicators have previously been fielded and found to be 'adequate' measures for research purposes.

WORK TO DATE

- ❖ Gallup International pilot tests of modules in Bolivia, Ecuador, Kenya, Pakistan, Czech Republic (2007)
- ❖ Focus group testing of modules in Bolivia (Aug-Sept 2007)
- ❖ Beijing workshop to discuss dimensions and modules in the context of China (Nov 2007)
- ❖ Publication of *Oxford Development Studies* special issue on the missing dimensions (Dec 2007)
- ❖ AWIRU use of shame and humiliation module in rural South African survey (Jan 2008)
- ❖ Award of six fieldwork grants to Masters students to carry out missing dimensions surveys (Apr 2008)
- ❖ Policy workshop in Montevideo, Uruguay (Oct 2008)
- ❖ Dimensions, indicators and policies discussed on Human Development Report Office HDR-net (Oct 2008-Jan 2009)
- ❖ Grants to three PEP Network research teams to conduct survey work in Chad, Nigeria, Sri Lanka (Dec 2008)
- ❖ Nationally representative survey of Chile (Jan-Mar 2009)
- ❖ Design and analysis of agency module for UNDP survey in Argentina, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua (Feb-Mar 2009)
- ❖ Discussion of modules with researchers and policymakers in Bhutan, Bolivia, Chile, Mexico (2007-09)
- ❖ Integration of OPHI modules into International Household Survey Network (IHSN) (2008-09)
- ❖ Work with LSE and UK government on agency (2008-09)
- ❖ Implementation of modules with Community-Based Monitoring System at village level in the Philippines (2009-10)

THE 'MISSING DIMENSIONS' OF POVERTY

EMPLOYMENT

Employment is of course the main source of income for most households globally; having a good and decent job is generally associated with being out of poverty, however poverty is defined. Additionally, employment can give a sense of self-respect and fulfilling life. There is no question as to the importance of employment quality as a fundamental aspect of individual wellbeing, however less agreement exists as to how much and what types of employment are necessary.



THE ABILITY TO GO ABOUT WITHOUT SHAME

Direct experiences of indignity, shame and humiliation continue to be cited by poor people and communities as painful components of their deprivation. Shame and humiliation can result in isolation – thereby corroding social relations. They are also linked to multiple effects on psychological wellbeing, and on group identity (which in turn can lead to conflict).



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AGENCY

Agency denotes the freedom to act on behalf of what one values and has reason to value. The opposite of a person with agency is someone who is coerced, oppressed or passive. Agency recurs as a variable that is of intrinsic and instrumental importance to impoverished communities: 'Greater freedom enhances the ability of people to help themselves, and also to influence the world, and these matters are central to the process of development' (Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, New York: Knopf Press, 1999: pp. 18-19).

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING

Psychological and subjective states of wellbeing have intrinsic and instrumental value. They are a key component of the other dimensions we propose, as well as an end result of their attainment. Moreover, they stand to contribute a richer perspective to our understanding of human experience and values, and particularly the importance of their non-material components.

PHYSICAL SAFETY

Violence undoes the development gains achieved in areas such as education, health, employment, income generation and infrastructure provision. Further, it impedes human freedom to live safely and securely, and can sustain poverty traps in many communities. However, violence is not inevitable to human interaction. Most multi-ethnic, multi-religious and poor peoples live in peace. There is a need for reliable and comparable data of violence against both person and property to greater inform our understanding of these concepts.



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