

Missing Dimensions of Poverty Data Further Particulars for the PEP Call for Proposals

The objective of human development is to expand the freedoms that people value and have reason to value, enabling people to live more fulfilled lives and to flourish. Data on people's freedoms is needed to guide and evaluate development actions. Though more such data already exists than in any previous generation, a critical bottleneck is a dearth of high-quality internationally comparable indicators of key freedoms. As an investment in future research, OPHI's first initiative has been to propose a shortlist of indicators and survey modules pertaining to five aspects that are often valuable to poor people and instrumentally important to poverty reduction but not often reported internationally. The dimensions include:

- **Employment**, including both formal and informal employment, with particular attention as to the quality of employment (Lugo 2007);
- **Empowerment**, or agency: the ability to advance goals one values and has reason to value (Ibrahim and Alkire 2007);
- **Physical safety**, focusing on security from violence to property and person, and perceived 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 developed one survey module in an area which we do not necessarily consider to be a dimension of poverty, but for which greater internationally comparable data are required:

- **Psychological and subjective wellbeing**, to emphasize meaning, satisfaction and their determinants (Samman 2007).¹

We have followed up the identification of potentially-relevant dimensions, indicators and survey questions by collecting data, drawn from small samples in several countries, to enable us to obtain these indicators and investigate the extent to which these data amplify our conception of poverty.

Research is needed in one or both of two areas. The first area is to critically scrutinise the survey instrument itself through additional piloting and validity testing. Teams applying to do such research would *not* propose a large-scale survey as funding is limited to the standard PEP lump-sum small grant of \$CAN 20,000 per project for core research (excluding additional funding for the participation in PEP general meetings, study visits, etc.). Rather, teams could undertake a small-medium quantitative survey (including the modules alongside other questions) alongside qualitative, participatory and/or ethnographic work, in order to probe the accuracy, validity, reliability, and limitations of the survey questions in a particular socio-economic and/or cultural context and to propose improvements. The research may also serve other local aims.

The second is to analyse data that will be available by December 2008 pertaining to all five modules of the proposed 'missing dimensions' – alongside the existing dimensions of health, nutrition, education, and consumption – with the goal of determining whether these data in fact enable more precise policy analysis and how. This could involve i) validity tests; ii) analysis of the relationships among the indicators within and between dimensions and population groups (using best practice techniques to control for endogeneity, etc); iii) critical analysis of whether policy actions identified using these data would be unidentifiable without the data; and/or iv) analysis of composite indicators seeking to incorporate multiple dimensions of poverty.

¹ The cited papers, which set out the logic for the focus on each dimension and for the selection of a shortlist of indicators, are available at www.ophi.org.uk. Additional information on the 'missing dimensions' research, including the survey modules, is also available here.