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MISSING DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY DATA

A Proposal for Internationally Comparable Indicators of Psychological and Subjective Wellbeing

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This document contains the actual survey questions proposed in the paper *A Proposal for Internationally Comparable Indicators of Psychological and Subjective Wellbeing* (Samman 2007) prepared for the May 2007 Workshop on Missing Dimensions of Poverty Data. The proposal is that these questions – or a refinement of them – might be considered a ‘module’ that could be added to nationally representative individual or household surveys. This module proposes seven indicators of psychological and subjective wellbeing:

PSYCHOLOGICAL

1. Meaning in life
2. Autonomy
3. Competence
4. Relatedness

SUBJECTIVE

5. Overall life satisfaction
6. Domain-specific life satisfaction

The domains proposed are material wellbeing (food, housing, income), health, productivity (work), security (physical safety); intimacy (relations with friends and family); community (education, neighborhood, actively helping others); and wellbeing from spiritual/religious/philosophical beliefs.

7. Happiness

¹ Samman (2007) elaborates on the selection of these indicators and questions, and the research questions that could be addressed were these questions adopted into multi-topic individual or household surveys.

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

MEANING IN LIFE

Please take a moment to think about what makes your life feel important to you. Please respond to the following statements as truthfully and accurately as you can, and also please remember that these are very subjective questions and that there are no right or wrong answers. Please answer according to the scale below.

1	2	3	4
Not at all true	Not very true	Somewhat true	Completely true

STATEMENT	SCORE
My life has a clear sense of purpose	
I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful	
I have discovered a satisfying life purpose	

SOURCE: Short-form of Steger questionnaire for presence of Meaning in Life (Steger *et al.* 2006). He combines sub-scales to measure the presence of meaning and search for meaning. A short-form of the 'presence' subscale only is used here.

If the answer to this question is 3 or 4 => **What makes your life meaningful?**

BASIC PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS

Please read each of the following items carefully, thinking about how it relates to your life, and then indicate how true it is for you. Use the following scale to respond:

1	2	3	4
Not at all true	Not very true	Somewhat true	Completely true

A) AUTONOMY

STATEMENT	SCORE
I feel like I am free to decide for myself how to live my life.	
I generally feel free to express my ideas and opinions	
I feel like I can pretty much be myself in daily situations ²	

B) COMPETENCE

STATEMENT	SCORE
People I know tell me I am competent at what I do.	
Most days I feel a sense of accomplishment from what I do.	
I often feel very capable.	

C) RELATEDNESS

STATEMENT	SCORE
I get along well with people I come into contact with.	
I consider the people I regularly interact with to be my friends.	
People in my life care about me.	

Source: Short-form of Ryan and Deci Basic Psychological Needs scales. (Ryan and Deci 2000, 2001)

² The meaning of this question (for translation) is to act in harmony with who one is.

SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING

LIFE SATISFACTION

Overall, how satisfied are you with your life overall/(domain)? Are you...

- 1 Very satisfied
- 2 Fairly satisfied
- 3 Not very satisfied
- 4 Not at all satisfied

Domain	Specific item(s)	Satisfaction level
Life Satisfaction overall³		
Material wellbeing	Food	
	Housing	
	Income	
Health	Health	
Productivity	Work	
Security	Physical safety	
Intimacy	Friends & family	
Community	Education	
	Neighborhood	
	Ability to help others	
Religion/spiritual wellbeing	Wellbeing from spiritual, religious or philosophical beliefs	

The domains used are adapted from The International Wellbeing Group (2006) Personal Wellbeing Index. The 4-scale measure is feasible for enumerator-administered questionnaires in developing countries.

Key reference:
International Wellbeing Group (2006).

HAPPINESS

Taking all things together, would you say you are:

- 1 Very happy
- 2 Rather happy
- 3 Not very happy
- 4 Not at all happy

Key reference:
World database of happiness, http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/hap_quer/hqs_fp.htm.
This variant of the 'happiness' question is the most frequently used internationally, having appeared in 190 nationally-representative surveys worldwide.

³ "How satisfied are you with your life as a whole?"

References

- International Wellbeing Group (2006). Personal Wellbeing Index. Melbourne: Australian Centre on Quality of Life, Deakin University (http://www.deakin.edu.au/research/acqol/instruments/wellbeing_index.htm)
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