Measuring Chronic Poverty & Capability: Shared Conceptual Issues

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The Chronic Poverty Literature demonstrates different views regarding the importance of dimensions used:

- *1. The Dimensions that matter **vary** depending on people's values, and these can be counterintuitive and need to be checked repeatedly.*

- *2. Different sets of dimensions identify **roughly the same** persons as chronically poor'; the selection of dimensions makes little difference.*

- *3. Different dimensions/variables generate **very different results** so their selection is of paramount importance to chronic poverty analysis.*

Conceptual considerations

(Conceptual considerations for D/V selection are to be complemented by considerations re: the kind and quality of data generated by variables.)

- Are the D/V **valuable** (capabilities people value and have reason to value)
- Are they of relatively high **priority** to the poor?
- **Are these conditions true in each time wave?**
- **How do these change over time?**
- *Such information would be of significant interest for capability measures in general.*

How Dimensions are selected at present:

- *Existing Data (90% of studies)*
- *Assumptions – e.g. HDI*
- *Public consensus – e.g. Human Rts, MDG*
- *Ongoing Participatory Processes –*
- *Empirical Evidence on people's values*

- *(these overlap; often several are used)*

Possible principles:

- chronic poverty should be defined to include *all* 'socially influenceable'[1] capabilities that are valued and prioritized by the communities.

- chronic poverty measures may include functionings that are not highly valued or prioritized in one wave but have been in the past and may be in the future. This will allow comparability across time.

- Information regarding the value and priority of capabilities should be integrated into the dataset and tracked over time.

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[1] See Sen, Amartya. 2004. "Elements of a Theory of Human Rights." *Philosophy and Public Affairs.*

- *The first step would result in the choice of certain dimensions (Ds) and indicators (v) of capabilities whose perpetual deprivation constitutes chronic poverty*
- *D1   D2   D3*
- *v1, v2, v3, …   v1, v2, v3, …   v1, v2, v3…*

- *The second step would identify which of these seemed to be most valued and highly prioritized by participants at time t1 - for example, perhaps the elements highlighted below.*

- *D1   D2   D3*
- *v1, v2, v3, …   v1, v2, v3, …   v1, v2, v3…*
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- *If variables were identified that were valued and highly prioritized but had not been included in previous waves these variables might be added such that subsequent waves, at least, would include them.*

- *D1   D2   D3*
- *v1, v2, v3, v4…   v1, v2, v3, …   v1, v2, v3…*

Possible Dimensions – Ranis & Stewart 2006.

- **HDI**
- **Mental well-being.**
- **Empowerment.**
- **Political freedom.**
- **Social relations.**
- **Community well-being.**
- **Inequalities.**
- **Work conditions.**
- **Leisure conditions.**
- **Political security.**
- **Economic security.**
- **Environmental conditions.**