

WeD



Wellbeing in Developing Countries

ESRC Research Group



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Wellbeing in Developing Countries



Wellbeing and its Challenges to International Development

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*Presentation to: IIASA Conference 07
Global Development: Science and Policies for the Future
14th – 16th November 2007*



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Wellbeing and International Development

International Development needs a practical concept of Wellbeing if it is to reach beyond the Millennium Development Goals and confront the major and interlinked challenges of poverty, conflict and sustainability that confront us globally



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A Proposition

The objective of international development is:

to create the conditions in societies around the world where all people are reasonably able to pursue wellbeing in socially, politically and environmentally sustainable ways.



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Not Obviously Contentious and Not New

In December 1986 the United Nations adopted 'The Declaration on the Right to Development'



This recognized that:

development is a comprehensive ... process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting therefrom



A Practical Definition of Wellbeing

Wellbeing is a state of being with others

- where human needs are met**
- where one can act meaningfully to pursue one's goals**
- where one is able to enjoy a satisfactory quality of life**

(WeD, 2007)



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A Hybrid Definition of Wellbeing

That combines elements of both
objective and subjective approaches

and

transcends them by recognising the
ways in which we make the societies
we live in



This argues against a tendency:

- To see poverty as a framework for understanding the poor and developing countries
- To see wellbeing as a framework for the wealthy and for developed countries

A Practical Definition of Wellbeing

- Must better explain why poverty persists
- Must better inform policy choices in how we tackle poverty



We have to be able to study it: to generate evidence with which to inform policy

A Wellbeing Research Methodology :

1. Community Profiling
2. The Resources and Needs Questionnaire (RANQ)
3. Quality of Life (WeDQoL)
4. Income and Expenditure Survey and Diaries (I&E)
5. Process research
6. Structures and regimes

(See <http://www.weldev.org.uk/research/methods-toobox/toolbox>)



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What do the studies reveal?

- Inequalities within countries between what needs are being met and for whom
- Differences in who is and who is not able to act meaningfully in respect of their valued goals
- Considerable differences in what people are able to aspire to
- Differences in levels of satisfaction in achieving their aspirations

The Micro-Foundations of Conflict

- Not all visions of wellbeing and the strategies that people may wish to adopt to achieve it are compatible with each other
- Analysis of this notion of wellbeing exposes the micro-foundations of conflict
- Poverty is a form of latent conflict over the struggle for wellbeing (or for many to avoid illbeing)

It is manifest not just in material lacks, but in the inter-linkage of this with forms of social exclusion, aspirational deprivation or the exercise of violence.

Wellbeing, the Individual and Society

- The definition of wellbeing that is promoted here is not one that is preoccupied with the individual
- It is a definition and form of analysis that emphasises the importance of the social human being in the context of relationships, social meanings, and cultural values
- Wellbeing here is not 'happiness' and is not focused only on the individual but highlights the connection between our personal choices and the question of how we are to live together in society



How are we to live together?

- In raising the issue of how we are to live together, wellbeing evokes the notion of sustainability
- But it highlights the ways that environmental sustainability is interconnected with broader global concerns of social and political sustainability
- If forces us to examine our structures of governance and in our villages and towns, in our nation states and in our global community, to ask again
 - How are we to live together?

