



An ESRC/DFID Research Project

How does poverty affect wellbeing?

How does people's general wellbeing affect their pathways into, within and out of poverty?

These questions are at the heart of a three-year project undertaking research in rural communities in Zambia and India.

With two rounds of data collection across two years, this research will provide systematic new evidence on the factors that promote wellbeing at personal and community level, how these relate to poverty, and what drives change over time.

In partnership with local NGOs, the project is also working to produce a statistically-tested approach to assessing wellbeing in monitoring and evaluation of poverty-focused development programmes.

Based at the Centre for Development Studies at the University of Bath, UK, the project runs from 2010-13.

www.wellbeingpathways.org



What is Wellbeing?

Wellbeing is experienced when people have what they need for life to be good. But what makes life good? Our model identifies eight key domains through which people derive wellbeing:

- a secure and enabling environment
- economic sufficiency
- scope to participate and take effective action
- positive social connections
- quality close relationships
- mental and physical wellness
- competence and self-worth
- a sense of deeper meaning, order or purpose

Wellbeing and Poverty

Wellbeing and poverty are associated with each other but are not simple opposites. Directions of influence run both ways. When people are poor, economic factors have greater impact on their level of wellbeing than when they are affluent. But aspects of wellbeing also influence poverty: how people respond to their situation, their capacity to withstand shocks, and the different kinds of resource they can draw on. Social and personal relationships seem to be particularly critical in enabling people to get by and get on. A wellbeing approach goes beyond a concern with 'social capital' to focus on the *quality* of relationships: at home; in the community; with NGOs and the state.

Why Wellbeing in Development?

Wellbeing offers a positive focus on people's hopes rather than a negative emphasis on what they lack. It identifies connections between different parts of life, the qualities of relationship or personal capacities that can promote or undermine development effectiveness. It draws attention to the way development programmes are undertaken, and the quality of interaction between agency staff and local people.

Research Approach

The research brings together psychology and sociology, qualitative and quantitative perspectives. A survey will produce poverty and wellbeing profiles for 700 respondents across the two countries, made up of 300 couples and 100 women who are heading households. They will all be interviewed twice, in 2010/11 and 2012/13, to show changes in people's poverty and wellbeing profiles and the relationship between these over time. In-depth, qualitative interviews will also be used to understand local perspectives more fully and to trace individual pathways in more detail. Regular briefing papers, presentations, meetings and a project website will provide information about the on-going research. We will also produce a handbook for development practitioners.

Research Team

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