‘It’s what kills people’s spirits’: Poverty, shame and social isolation
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OPHI's Missing Dimensions

- Quality of work
- Empowerment
- Physical safety
- Psychological wellbeing
- Social connectedness - shame and humiliation, and social isolation
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• Empowerment
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Why is social connectedness important?

The most important thing is being able to live with others because if one is poor by relating with others can reduce one’s poverty.

‘Relationships are very important, especially for people that feel lonely, and for poor people as well... because many of them don’t have hope because of their circumstances’

‘Poverty means being lonely... and not being able to get other things because you are lonely’.
Social isolation is a deprivation of social connectedness. It is the inadequate quality and quantity of social relations with other people at the different levels where human interaction takes place (individual, group, community and the larger social environment).
connection is a deprivation connectedness. It is the quality and quantity of interactions with other people at different levels of interaction takes...
Quality and quantitative interactions with other different levels in interaction take dual, group,
a) External social isolation

- Frequency of social contact
- Social network support
- Presence of a discussion partner
- Reciprocity and volunteering

b) Internal social isolation

- Satisfaction with social relations
- Need for relatedness
- Feeling of belonging to own neighbourhood/village/community
- Loneliness
- Trust
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'Falling incomes and rising poverty are also eroding the capacity of poor people to be part of social networks of support, leaving them unable to engage in and maintain social exchange. By cutting people off from vital sources of support, social isolation - a critical but often neglected outcome of poverty - makes them even more vulnerable to adverse shocks and crises' (Gonzalez, 2007: 62-63).
Shame

‘Even if you are hungry...You can’t go to them to ask for food or money because they are judging you that you are poor...they won’t give you money...so it’s better that you isolate yourself’

‘Because in our community here people have this attitude – “if you’re poor then I can’t mingle with you, you can’t be my friend’

'... if they don’t have food – the neighbour won’t be close to them because they are poor, because they always have to give them something to eat, so they always judge them'
'They do isolate themselves because they are being classified as the poor...they will isolate themselves, full of hatred to anyone'.

'in our community, most of the people who get HIV are the most poor people. So we tend to say they were using their bodies to get food and money...so the stigma is there...that’s why some people are not able to tell anyone they have HIV, and they end up dying because they can’t ask for help because they are ashamed.'
'We have two choices: either we sink together or get out of the mud together.... No one individual or group can make it alone, in our situation.' (Discussion group of men, Qoyta Village, Somaliland, cited in Narayan, Chambers, Shah and Petersch, 2000:p279).
Thanks so much for listening. Your feedback would be enormously appreciated. My email is china.mills@qeh.ox.ac.uk. Please see www.ophi.org.uk for work on the multi-dimensions and missing dimensions of poverty.
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