

SESSION 3.1. INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO MEASURING POVERTY, WELL-BEING AND PROGRESS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR STATISTICAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Measuring Wellbeing for Development:

A Guide

The idea of human wellbeing is universal: it matters for all people everywhere, whether in developed or developing countries. Even for the poorest, the quality of life matters. While it is important, for example, that people have enough food, it is also important that other aspects comprising the quality of their lives are not overlooked in international development policy. This document explains why a clearer focus on human wellbeing is required; how it can be measured; and how it can help to reorient international development policy thinking.

It has been widely accepted that measuring societal development in terms of income alone is inadequate and that these measures need to be supplemented by others founded on a more holistic view of human progress. This is especially so as we enter an era characterised by unexpected shocks and crises and when the sustainability of our current development approaches is under question.

The primer explains why a focus on human well-being not only has sound conceptual foundations but has potentially huge practical benefits at this time. There is already considerable momentum amongst governments around the world for a shift to take account of human well-being in policy deliberations. This primer shares experiences and lessons from developed and developing countries and from a range of different cultural and political contexts. It then explains the specific relevance of the human wellbeing orientation for a number of key areas of contemporary international development thinking.

Why focus on human wellbeing? This section reviews different concepts of human wellbeing and considers the relationships between peoples wellbeing, economic development and societal progress.

A review of measuring wellbeing for development. This section reviews the different ongoing efforts to measure human wellbeing and to orient public policy thinking towards it. It will review the different approaches taken and the different methodologies being adopted.

Human wellbeing and poverty. The Millennium Declaration acknowledged perhaps the biggest ongoing challenge for global society is the continued existence of chronic and debilitating poverty. This section will explain how a focus on human wellbeing reorients and improves the clarity of our thinking on poverty and how people are vulnerable to it.

Human wellbeing and sustainability. Environmental challenges are likely to be increasingly significant in the coming century. Pressures on scarce natural resources are increasing and already our development pathways are generating climate change that is recognised as being unsustainable. This section explores how human wellbeing is interdependent with the sustainability of natural ecosystems and thus incorporated into the wellbeing concept.

Human wellbeing and resilience to shocks. In the wake of recent global and local shocks, resilience is emerging as a key international development concept. This section explains the relationship between human wellbeing and resilience. It will indicate how a systems approach shows that improvements in human wellbeing and increased resilience can be interlinked.

Human wellbeing governance and conflict. Considerations of the sustainability of human wellbeing quickly bring us to issues of governance. This section explains the relationship between human wellbeing and governance and will consider how it helps us understand contexts where governance breaks down and results in overt conflict.

Human wellbeing women and children: A consequence of an income focus in the measurement of development is that it makes considerations women and children second order issues. This orientation causes much development thinking to systematically overlook the contribution of women to wellbeing at family and community levels and pay inadequate attention to how we nurture children in order to ensure their wellbeing. This section explains why a focus on human wellbeing brings a different perspective on the roles of women and children in development processes.

Human wellbeing and the current global policy environment: This final section considers the implications of a focus on measuring human wellbeing for current and upcoming global policy deliberations. These include the 2015 review of the MDGs and the ongoing debates over climate change.