# Unit One: Understanding Inequality

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UNIT INFORMATION

Unit Overview
Addressing inequality and enhancing human well-being are the central concerns of gender and social development. This unit explores global inequalities with particular attention to poverty and gender. It considers broad patterns of inequality and how these characterise different developing and developed countries and regions (Section 1). The unit explores ways of theorising well-being in the context of development and their different interpretations of inequality (Section 2). The unit ends by considering the way social needs have been understood in development policy and distinguishes between approaches to poverty and gender inequality that are based on efficiency, needs, and rights (Section 3).

Unit Aims
- To introduce and describe global inequalities with respect to poverty and gender.
- To present a key theoretical framework for an understanding of well-being.
- To outline key differences in development policy approaches to well-being, poverty, and gender equality.

Unit Learning Outcomes
By the end of this unit students should be able to:
- analyse global inequalities with respect to poverty and gender
- define the theory of well-being
- recognise different perspectives on social and gender inequalities within policy approaches

Unit Interdependencies
This is an introductory unit that sets out the ground for many of themes picked up later in the module. In particular, the concept of capabilities is further explored in relation to gender and social relations at the micro-level in Unit 4; the issue of rights is picked up in different ways in Units 5, 7 and 9; more detailed accounts of the historical evolution of policy approaches for social development and gender are covered in Units 2 and 3 respectively; and, analysis of policy from a social development and gender perspective is addressed in more detail in Unit 6 and with reference to the Millennium Development Goals and the new aid environment in Unit 7.
KEY READINGS


This paper looks at three documents that focus not on absolute deprivations, as the MDGs do, but on the extent of inequalities in people’s life chances and outcomes within and between countries. The authors examine their various approaches to equity and equality and why they matter for development (supplementing Sections 1 and 2). They argue that donors need to pay more attention to issues of equity, social justice, and fairness and that there are good reasons for paying more attention to inequality (of particular relevance to Section 3). Make notes on the different interpretations of inequality that the authors identify; their criticisms of the MDGs; and their recommendations for the future.


These two chapters provide a background to some of the most important elements of this course. The first chapter examines the nature of theory and knowledge and considers feminist approaches to research and theorising. The second chapter introduces the concept of gender and development and critically examines the underlying assumptions that drive theory and practice. The chapter outlines early perspectives on development and gender and considers the role of discourse in expressing and creating perceptions of the developing world. The author also details differential experiences of women and men within pre-colonial societies and the emergence of feminist thinking and theory within the development discourse as a way of understanding social and productive relations. The chapter concludes with four case studies that illustrate gender relations in different communities.
FURTHER READINGS


This article utilises primary research to analyse the way subjective well-being among poor people can be defined and measured. It fits into the growing literature on poverty as a failure of capacity to aspire. Research in Bangladesh, Thailand, and Peru illustrates that a measurement strategy based on defining well-being as a function of the gap between individuals’ diverse and multiple aspirations, and their satisfaction with achieving them has the potential to illuminate variation in individual and local capacity to respond to different development opportunities. This article complements Section 2.


This chapter discusses the problems of poverty and inequality in relation to development. The first part (pp. 44–54) looks at the way poverty has been defined and measured and distinguishes between absolute and relative poverty and will complement and deepen the discussion of poverty and inequality covered in Section 1. The second part of the chapter (pp. 54–64) examines the changing incidence of poverty and quality of life in different regions of the world. It provides a good overview of current trends to complement Section 1 as well as illustrating the value of quality of life approaches to well-being that will add to your knowledge of approaches to well-being from Section 2. The final part (pp. 64–86) complements Section 3 and deals with strategies for poverty eradication and offers a long historical perspective on approaches to poverty eradication, sketches the neo-liberal approach that dominates today, and argues that a social development approach based on the Copenhagen Declaration is the most promising way forward.


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Grant M (2006) I have been patient enough: gendered futures and mentors of female youth in urban Zimbabwe. Social Dynamics 31(1) 21–46.


Available from: [www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2810%2961196-8/fulltext#article_upsell](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2810%2961196-8/fulltext#article_upsell) [Accessed 18 June 2013]


MULTIMEDIA


In the wake of the UN Millennium Development Goals Summit in September 2010, this podcast takes a look at the challenge of meeting the needs of the world’s poorest and asks what should happen to global development after 2015.


This podcast discusses inequality with Andy Sumner, the author of the paper: ‘Global poverty and the new bottom billion: three quarters of the world’s poor live in middle-income countries’ (Sumner 2010). This paper examines global inequalities and the shift of the world’s poor from the low-income countries to the middle-income countries and considers how this affects the distribution of aid and development interventions. This podcast picks up the discussion in Section 1.2 of Unit 1 of how poverty is measured and expands on ideas of relative poverty, how we classify countries for aid purposes as well as different forms of poverty.


Amartya Sen discusses various related issues concerned with welfare. He explains his capabilities thesis and covers gender and social exclusion.
1.0 **POVERTY AND GENDER INEQUALITY**

**Section Overview**
This section broadly describes global inequalities with respect to poverty and gender. It begins by introducing the threat that these inequalities pose to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (Sub-section 1.1), before looking in more detail at poverty and inequality (Sub-section 1.2) and then gender and inequality (Sub-section 1.3).

**Section Learning Outcome**
By the end of this section students should be able to:
- analyse global inequalities with respect to poverty and gender

1.1 **Threats to the Millennium Development Goals**
The desire to address inequality has long driven efforts at development. It has been a guiding principle at the heart of attempts by nations to work together for a better world. At the turn of a new century, the Millennium Declaration of the United Nations set out a bold vision of reducing severe poverty and extending universal human rights. These aims are set out in the Millennium Development Goals as a time-bound and quantified set of targets to be achieved by 2015 (see 1.1.1).

| Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty | Target 1. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than $1 a day.  
Target 2. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. |
<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education</td>
<td>Target 3. Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women</td>
<td>Target 4. Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality</td>
<td>Target 5. Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health</td>
<td>Target 6. Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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| Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases | **Target 7.** Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS.  
**Target 8.** Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases. |
| --- | --- |
| Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability | **Target 9.** Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources.  
**Target 10.** Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.  
**Target 11.** Have achieved by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers. |
| Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development | **Target 12.** Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system (includes a commitment to good governance, development, and poverty reduction, both nationally and internationally).  
**Target 13.** Address the special needs of the Least Developed Countries (includes tariff- and quota-free access for Least Developed Countries, exports, enhanced program of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries [HIPC’s] and cancellation of official bilateral debt, and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction).  
**Target 14.** Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing states (through the Program of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and 22nd General Assembly provisions).  
**Target 15.** Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term.  
**Target 16.** In co-operation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth.  
**Target 17.** In co-operation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries. |


It is clear that many of the targets will not be achieved for most of the developing world. Despite the clear success in facilitating global political agreements and the
increased co-ordination of aid and assistance between multilateral, bilateral donors and non-governmental organisations, there remain a great number of challenges. One of the greatest challenges is persistent inequality both between and within regions and inequality between men and women. These inequalities are highlighted in the Millennium Development Goals Report 2010. The progress so far, based on the findings of this report are summarised in 1.1.2.

### 1.1.2 Progress so far

Despite progress in some areas, the global food and economic and financial crisis has contributed to a stalling of progress and inequalities both within and between countries continue to exist. The gap between the rich and the poor, and those living in rural or remote areas or in slums versus those in better-off urban populations, and those disadvantaged by geographic location, sex, age, disability or ethnicity remain a major hurdle to overcome in most developing countries. Current figures demonstrate that the overall poverty rate across the developing world is expected to fall to 15% by 2015. This figure reflects a halving of the number of people living under the international poverty line since 1990 (UN 2010 p. 4). Yet this figure does not account for the inequalities between regions. More recent analysis suggests that progress has been stalled and even worsened in sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern and South Eastern Asia where the economic and financial crisis is set to result in an additional 64 million people experiencing extreme poverty by the end of 2010 relative to a ‘no-crisis’ scenario (UN 2010 p. 7). The World Bank predicts that these shocks to the world economy will likely result in slightly higher poverty rates by 2015 and 2020 in these regions. These figures can be contrasted with other regions in which poverty rates are expected to fall. The fastest growth is occurring in East Asia where poverty rates in China are expected to fall to 5% by 2015 and in India from 51% [1990] to 24% by 2015.

In specific MDGs targets, primary school enrolment across the developing world has risen to 89% however, it likely that the target (that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling) will not be met as the 2008 figure showed that one in four children of primary school age were not in school in half of the sub-Saharan African countries where data is available. Despite this figure, sub-Saharan Africa has achieved the greatest strides in net primary school enrolment with an 18% increase between 1999 and 2008 (UN 2010 p. 16). However, of equal importance is the continuity of education and the gender gap. In sub-Saharan Africa more than 30% of primary school students drop out before completing the final grade. The gender gap has decreased from a global figure of 57% of the out of school population being girls in 1999 to 53% in 2008 with the exception of sub-Saharan Africa with a percentage of 66% of out of school students being girls.

Inequality is seen to be a major obstacle to achieving universal primary education. Gender parity in primary and secondary education is considered to be out of reach for most of the developing world, in particular Oceania, sub-Saharan Africa, and Western Asia. The gender gap is most apparent in secondary education in the regions of sub-Saharan Africa, Western Asia and Southern Asia. However, in Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia the numbers of girls in secondary school is greater than boys. In these areas this trend is also mirrored in tertiary education.

In employment, women continue to make up the largest unpaid workforce with only 41% of women in paid employment [2008] particularly so in South Africa, where only one in three paid jobs outside the agricultural sector employ a woman. Even in paid employment, rights such as equal pay, conditions and security are unequal to men’s. On the target of political power, quotas in some regions are helping women gain political presence. In Bolivia, 40% of elected members to the upper house are women. In South Africa, 44% of elected seats are held by women which places South Africa in third place below Rwanda and Sweden for number of women in parliament. Conversely, 16 countries in Northern Africa, Western Asia, the Caribbean and Oceania have no female ministers.

The mortality rate for children under five had dropped by 28% from 100 deaths per 1,000 live births to 72 in 2008 (UN 2010 p. 26). Bangladesh, Bolivia, Eritrea, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malawi, Mongolia and Nepal have all reduced their under-five
mortality rates by 4.5% annually or more. Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique and Niger have seen absolute reductions of more than 100 per 1000 live births since 1990. However, among the 67 countries with the highest child mortality rates (defined as 40% or more deaths per 1000 live births), only 10 are likely to achieve the MDG target. The highest rates of child mortality are in sub-Saharan Africa were 1 in every 7 children die before their 5th birthday.

Other targets on health include the combating of pneumonia, diarrhoea, malaria and AIDS all of which account for 43% of all deaths in children under five. Interventions for malaria, HIV control and measles immunisation have cut child deaths from 12.5 million in 1990 to 8.8 million in 2008. Between 2003 and 2008 the number of people receiving antiretroviral therapy increased tenfold. The number of newly infected people has dropped from 3.5 to 2.7 million. Many regions have experienced stability although for Eastern Europe, Central Asia and other parts of Asia, the rate of new HIV infection is still rising. Sub-Saharan Africa is the most affected with 72% of all new infections in 2008. Malaria prevention systems have improved with 20% rise in the use of insecticide treated mosquito nets.

It is unlikely that the target of reducing by three quarters the maternal mortality rate by 2015 will be achieved, although progress has been made in all regions with figures of women receiving skilled assistance during labour increasing from 53% in 1990 to 6% in 2008. Nevertheless, this increase is marred by the vast inequalities between the richest and poorest households, particularly in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa where the wealthy are 5 times and 3 times respectively more likely to receive assistance than the poor.

Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals has been uneven and it is likely that many targets will not be achieved across the majority of the developing world. However, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals Report is optimistic that progress on poverty reduction is occurring and there are increasingly positive trends in the areas of health and education. Some of the major challenges identified by the report are the difficulties in finding the right policies and interventions that transform the pace of change as well as a continued effort to improve data and monitoring systems.

Source: summarised from UN (2010)

1.2 Analysis of the MDGs

Since the initiation of the MDGs in 2000 much work has gone in to assessing countries progress in relation to achieving the goals and targets, however few studies have attempted a cross-sectoral analysis of the implementation of the MDGs. In 2010 a consortium of institutions at the London International Development Centre (LIDC, comprising Birkbeck, Institute of Education, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, School of Oriental and African Studies, Royal Veterinary College and the School of Pharmacy) and including universities of Malawi, South Africa, India, Zambia and Thailand did just that. The commission, published as a special edition of The Lancet (2010), brought together a group of disciplines to consider the challenges posed by the MDGs. This interdisciplinary study examines the goals themselves rather than a country-by-country analysis of progress. It looks at the formulation of the targets, their implementation, interpretation, and the appropriateness of the indicators across the spectrum of disciplines and sectors which the MDGs encompass. The following section provides a brief overview of some of the conclusions from that report.

Despite some major challenges posed by the MDGs, the report argues that their existence has contributed to four positive outcomes:

(1) Brought attention to main issues of development and poverty encouraging a
broad global political consensus

(2) Provided a focus for advocacy
(3) Improved the targeting and flow of aid
(4) Improved the monitoring of development projects
(5) A further important contribution made by the MDGs is the inclusion of gender into aid packages.

However, with these positives are accompanied with challenges. It has been argued that the very elements of the MDGs which make them successful have also been the cause of major challenges. These challenges have been presented under the following headings;

**Conceptualisation and execution**

Conceptually, there are a number of problems identified with the various goals. For example, the conceptualisation of poverty is considered to be too narrowly focused on income. Education goals focus only on primary education and do not adequately consider the importance of post-primary education or the quality of learning. Similarly the health targets focus on maternal mortality, child mortality and a limited number of diseases. Gender equality focuses primarily on education, employment and parliamentary presence but says nothing about rights such as freedom from violence and adult literacy (Waage *et al* 2010 p. 7).

Other problems relate to the indicators, some of which suffer from ambiguity and difficulty in finding appropriate or indeed accurate measures. For example, measuring hunger has met with methodological problems and the indicator of prevalence of HIV/AIDS does not adequately account for the effect of antiretroviral therapy in its measurement. Indicators of gender equality do not consider the informal sector nor do they measure wage levels for example. The problems associated with the measurement and monitoring of indicators are further compounded by inadequate and incomplete data collection.

**Fragmentation**

Fragmentation has also been identified as a challenge. The fragmentation of goals, targets and indicators has resulted in gaps and a lack of attention to the linkages which exist between the many issues and sectors dealt with in the MDGs. Whilst poverty and hunger are interlinked in Goal 1, there is an underestimation of the relevance of malnutrition, not only to infant disease and maternal health but also to education. The focus on child mortality, maternal health and HIV/AIDS and other diseases has resulted in a narrow perception of the problems facing national health systems and has limited the resources available to other sectors of the system. There has also been a focus of investment in the vertical organisation of planning, monitoring, procurement etc to the detriment of horizontal planning and thus failed to be integrated into the broader national health system. Again, this narrow focus has also resulted in agencies and departments competing for funding resulting in efficiency losses.

1.2.1 Vertical and horizontal planning
Vertical planning generally refers to specific interventions within a specific sector, for instance the health sector. An example of this would be the provision of specific resources such as medical equipment, staffing, training, and evaluation in a particular area of health.

Horizontal planning refers to interventions that may cut across a number of sectors that interlink. For instance, the linkages between the health sector and sanitation or indeed the links between treating disease and disease prevention. Horizontal planning integrates these sectors both at the planning, intervention, and evaluation stages of a programme. Thus horizontal planning (and financing) may cut across more than one sector.

Source: unit author

Contested ownership and interpretation

Although governments around the globe pledged support for the MDGs, they were strongly driven by the large number of multilateral and bilateral agencies resulting in fragmented and in some cases contested ownership between departments and agencies. Examples of this have been observed with respect to the MDG 5 - maternal health, whereby leadership is distributed between different departments within WHO, although UNICEF is charged with the responsibilities of antenatal and postnatal care and UNFPA with delivery care. It has been found that in practice all three organisations have different approaches, resulting in management issues.

Furthermore, the donor led agenda has also marginalised voices from civil society as well as placing pressure on national governments to appear to be satisfying donor targets when in fact they are not considered a priority. The mismatch between what is an acceptable target globally and what is acceptable nationally has been cause of ineffectiveness. A further problem has been result of interpreting the global MDG targets as national ones. National targets for the MDGs have not been set leading to vast discrepancies between countries success rates. African countries for example consistently fall dramatically short of achieving any of the targets, which do not reflect the continent’s context and which ignore differences in technical and financial feasibility (Waage et al 2010 p. 14).

Equity

Inequity is an issue at the heart of the formulation of the MDGs, however it is also proving to be one of the most challenging elements mainly because inequity is conceived in economic terms and therefore measures wealth quintiles based on material assets. This does not provide an adequate picture for example, inequalities in education and healthcare may be more a function of ethnic origin or geography than of wealth disparities, and furthermore, the indicators for inequality do not tell us how inequality is distributed within a household or community.

Finally, almost all the targets focus on improving the lives of a proportion of people rather than all, for example reducing the maternal mortality rate or the proportion of people living on less than a $1 a day. The approach of the MDGs does not attempt to address (nor do the indicators describe) structural inequality but merely strive to achieve a 'specific minimum standard for a portion of the world’s people' (Waage et al 2010 p. 17). The report argues that a pro-poor human rights approach together with a closely interwoven set of principles should be taken to ameliorate this challenge. These principles are holism, equity, sustainability, ownership and global
1.3 Poverty and inequality

The first Millennium Development Goal is to reduce extreme poverty. This represents the widespread consensus about the priority of addressing poverty. However, there are different views on what poverty is and why it matters, what causes it and how it is best addressed. Poverty exists within and between nations, and global inequalities play a powerful role in shaping national experiences of poverty.

1.3.1 Poverty trends

There has been considerable progress worldwide in reducing poverty but this has in recent decades been largely due to rapid economic growth in Asia, and especially South East Asia. Although some countries in sub-Saharan Africa are making progress, the number of poor people living in this region is set to grow. The World Bank predicts that by 2015 over 90% of the world’s poor will live in sub-Saharan Africa or South Asia. Around a third of the poor in Africa are chronically poor, meaning that they experience poverty for most or all of their lives. A third of the world’s poor people live in states that have collapsed or have difficulty controlling their territory often as a result of conflict.


Before reading on, reflect on your own definition of poverty.

What do you think poverty is?
What do you think causes poverty?
How do you think that poverty should be addressed?

Narrow definitions of poverty see poverty in economic terms as about income, whilst broader definitions see poverty as being multi-dimensional. The poor are deprived not just because they lack money but because they are disadvantaged in a range of ways that might include poor access to education and health, little sense of participation in social and political life, low self-worth, and so on. Whilst it is often convenient to compare poverty in terms of income, especially at higher levels of aggregation across nations and regions for instance, it is important to remember that this is an extremely partial picture.

Comparing poverty at a societal level using economic measures can be done in a number of ways – through counting the poor, through measuring inequality or through looking at the level of average incomes.

- Methods of counting the poor rely on identifying an appropriate poverty line and categorising the numbers falling below this line in terms of per capita
household incomes. Whilst some poverty line measures identify absolute poverty, such as a dollar a day for developing countries, others focus on relative poverty, commonly set at less than 50 or 60% average national disposable income.

- Inequality is generally measured using a Gini co-efficient and by looking at the share of income or consumption received by the richest and poorest quintiles (20%) in society.

- Conventionally a country’s level of economic development has primarily been indexed in terms of its average per capita gross domestic product (GDP), a proxy for the level of average incomes.

These measures suffer from a number of common economic problems. The value and composition of goods considered essential to basic living varies across societies and between rural and urban areas. This problem can be addressed to some extent by adjusting poverty lines, or by adjusting GDP, for purchasing power. In societies which are not fully commoditised, the value of production and consumption outside of the monetary economy can be very substantial. However, what is most important to note is that these measures of poverty focus on different things: the incidence of absolute or relative income poverty, the extent of income inequality, and the level of income poverty.

In 1997 the UNDP introduced a summary measure of poverty for developing countries called the Human Poverty Index 1 (HPI-1). It combined measures of deprivations in a long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living. Deprivation in a long and healthy life is measured by the probability of not surviving to age 40. Deprivation in knowledge is measured by the adult illiteracy rate. Deprivation in a decent standard of living is the combined average of two measures: the percentage of the population who do not have access to an improved water source and the percentage of children who are underweight for age. In combination with other measures of inequality and income poverty, HPI-1 provided a fuller picture of how much poverty affects people’s lives in particular societies. However, despite going further than most measures of poverty in capturing the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, it remained a single summary statistic. Measuring poverty at an aggregate level can create the mistaken impression that the poor are homogeneous. In fact, the poor may be extremely diverse in terms of their social identity and in the way they experience poverty.

In order to combat these limitations, the Human Development Report 2010 introduces three additional indices as an attempt to capture aspects of well-being for inequality, gender equity, and poverty. These are

- Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI)
- The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)
- The Gender Inequality Index (GII) (see 1.4)

**Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI)**

This index adjusts the HDI to reflect inequalities in income, health and education. Comparable to the HDI indices which measures health, education and income indicators, the IHDI measures the inequality in the distribution of these indicators across the society. When the IHDI is the same as the HDI then total equality of
human development is achieved. The IHDI discounts the overall HDI figure to show inequality across all the indicators, therefore indicating the ‘loss’ in potential human development as a result of inequality (UNDP 2010 p. 87).

The IHDI attempts to capture the range of inequalities and illustrates that high HDI ranking does not indicate high equality, for example, Mozambique (ranked 165) loses over 45% of its HDI value and the much higher ranked Peru (ranked 63) loses 31% of its HDI value in the IHDI index, whilst the Ukraine (ranked lower than Peru at 69) only loses 8% in their IHDI value. A major limitation of the IHDI is its inability to capture overlapping inequalities; it is therefore not known how the different inequalities are dispersed throughout society (see 1.1.2).

**The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)**

This index considers multiple dimensions of poverty at the household level such as basic living standards, access to schooling, clean water and health care. The Multidimensional Poverty Index has been introduced to replace the Human Poverty Index which has been in use since 1997. The HPI measured deprivations in health, education and the standard of living. The measure worked on country averages and therefore only illustrated aggregate deprivations rather than deprivation attributed to specific groups. The MPI seeks to overcome this limitation by capturing the number of people experiencing deprivations (including multiple deprivations) and the average number of deprivations experienced. Thus the MPI represents the incidence and intensity of poverty and it can be located to a particular region, locality, ethnic group.

1.3.2 illustrates the IHDI in comparison to the HDI value. It is clear that some countries are more unequal that others. The IHDI takes into account not only the country’s average human development but also how it is distributed across the dimensions of life expectancy, education, and standard of living. By estimating the IHDI it is possible to see the effects of inequality in each country. The Human Development Report 2010 estimates that most countries lose on average 22% of their HDI due to inequality. Most inequalities occur in education and health rather than income although in sub-Saharan Africa inequality occurs across all dimensions.

Analysing who is poor and why sheds light on causes of poverty. Differences between the poor include the depth of poverty which has led to distinctions made by the Chronic Poverty Research Centre between those who are trapped in chronic poverty and those who move in and out of poverty over time. Commonly, women, children, the disabled, and the elderly are disproportionately represented amongst the poor. This reflects their greater vulnerability or risk of becoming poor.

Social analysis has called attention to the way that different views of poverty conceptualise the problem that development needs to address. Characterising the poor is important but without a proper analysis of the factors creating poverty this focus can lead to a view that the poor themselves are the problem that needs to be remedied. However, as multi-dimensional approaches to poverty have recognised, the poor are disadvantaged in terms of access to opportunities, skills, political power and social networks and these factors both create and reinforce their material poverty.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>GDP per capita*</th>
<th>HDI Rank</th>
<th>HDI value</th>
<th>Inequality-adjusted HDI value (IHDI)</th>
<th>% loss of HDI</th>
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<td>Brazil</td>
<td>14 192</td>
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<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>6591</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.652</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Based on the growth rate of GDP per capita (in PPP US$) from IMF (2010).

Source: summarised data from Economic Outlook — statistical tables UNDP (2010)

The way that the different dimensions of disadvantage experienced by the poor ‘lock’ them into poverty have been conceptualised in terms of social exclusion. Social research has explored the processes that create and reinforce poverty and see these at root as arising from unequal power relations. From this perspective, poverty is produced by society and can only be meaningfully addressed by tackling these inequalities and creating a society that is fairer. Analysis of the processes that create poverty involves describing the nature of inequality in a particular society and how it operates through various formal and informal mechanisms. These processes can only be reflected to a limited extent by quantitative data and also require qualitative analysis and interpretation. The value of qualitative understandings of poverty is well demonstrated by the following case study of female youth in urban Zimbabwe.

### 1.3.3 Causes of female youth poverty in urban Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe has experienced severe economic collapse with little prospect of improvement in the near future. Extremely high unemployment, hyperinflation, food shortages, instability, and personal insecurity are facts of everyday life. The incidence of HIV/AIDS has had severe economic and social consequences including family disruption and life expectancy had fallen to a mere 38 years by 2001.

The transition from childhood to adulthood has always been important for young women’s futures but the nature of this transition in Zimbabwe, as in many other sub-Saharan settings, has been radically altered by processes of development that create new vulnerabilities for young women. Traditional pathways to adulthood have been transformed by school attendance which forces young women to take responsibility for their daily survival earlier on whilst delaying marriage and childbearing until later. School attendance promotes a new pathway to adulthood through economic
independence offered by paid employment.

Young women and their parents invest heavily in schooling as a route to paid employment with the expectation that young women will work hard to realise this goal and be able to repay or support parents in return. However, these expectations are rarely realised and most end up in low-end, low-skill gender-specific activities or unemployed. Despite their ambitions, the reality is that many young women lack the skills and training necessary to earn a decent living. Many have been disadvantaged by inappropriate school curricula, poor quality education, and intermittent attendance because of financial difficulties. As a result these young women are often out of school and lack the resources for other courses or training.

Immediate and extended family support for young women is very limited given their own increasing difficulties in making ends meet. The unrealistic expectation that education will enable young women to determine their own life course also has a psychological cost by casting young women as failures.


Experts dominate in representations of poverty but the poor themselves can be considered ‘experts’ too. Their subjective experiences of poverty are an integral part of qualitative understandings of poverty. The value of subjective perspectives is demonstrated by the Voices of the Poor research (see 1.3.4).

1.3.4 Subjective understandings of poverty

Participatory and qualitative research involving more than 20,000 poor people from 23 countries sought to investigate the reality of poor people’s experiences. It confirmed that the subjective experience of poverty went beyond material concerns to include multiple and interlocking dimensions that combined to sustain powerlessness. The dimensions identified were:

- physical hunger, fatigue, and illness
- insufficient, seasonal and insecure assets and livelihoods
- spatial isolation in places that are marginalised, excluded and vulnerable
- inequitable gender relations
- discriminatory and abusive social relations
- lack of security (protection and peace of mind)
- disempowering institutions
- weak social networks and social organisations
- lack of skills and capabilities

1.4 Gender and inequality

Gender inequality is now recognised as being the most pervasive inequality worldwide. There is no country in the world where women enjoy the same opportunities as men. The following extract in 1.4.1 outlines trends and progress in reducing gender inequalities around the world.

1.4.1 Trends and progress in gender inequalities

Since the First World Conference on Women in 1975 all the key indicators show progress towards greater sex equality in average terms: female illiteracy has declined, girls’ enrolment in primary and secondary school has increased rapidly, women’s health indicators and their use of contraception have improved and almost everywhere women’s presence in public life has grown. However, progress has been slow and uneven: gender inequalities have often persisted, sometimes deepened or taken new forms.

In many developing countries the gender balance in education still favours boys. Gender segregation in labour markets means that although women’s participation in paid work has increased they are frequently to be found in the low status jobs with low pay and insecure conditions. Women are disproportionately represented amongst the poor:

Large numbers of women are ‘missing’ from the populations in China and India mainly as a result of infant and child deaths from differential access to health care and nutrition.

Although the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing represented a policy landmark, the Beijing Plus 10 Review in 2005 declared that the record on gender justice has been ambivalent.


These ‘gender gaps’ exist within and between nations. The Gender and Development Index (GDI) created by the UNDP in 1995 is a single measure that summarises the ‘gender gaps’ in the Human Development Index (HDI). This comprises three variables: life expectancy, literacy, and GDP per capita. It is a useful summary measure of gender inequality that can have a powerful effect on influencing policy decision-makers.

The nature of gender inequality means that the relevance of the indicators it incorporates varies more across different social contexts. For instance, gender disparities in literacy may be virtually eliminated whilst women’s economic and political opportunities remain highly restricted. So at the same time, the UNDP introduced a companion index called the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) that reflects women’s participation in political decision-making, their access to professional opportunities, and their earning power. Taken together the GDI and GEM provide a better summary picture of gender inequality and this can be compared across different countries (see 1.4.3). However, the GDI and the GEM are based on the HDI and focused on the ‘gaps’ between the genders in literacy, life expectancy and GDP per capita. Whilst the GEM measure encompasses political decision-making, access to professional opportunities and power over economic
resources, both measures are somewhat limited in reflecting women’s experiences. The GDI is not considered a measure of gender inequality, rather it is the HDI adjusted for gender disparities. Both of these measures have been criticised for crudely disaggregating data and estimating incomes for countries with poor data resulting in inaccurate measures of inequality. In the 2010 Human Development Report, further problems of the GDI and GEM were identified as being dominated by income levels and the GEM indicators reflected a strong elite bias resulting in a lack of relevance for developing countries (UNDP 2010).

1.4.2 Education of girls in the Central African Republic

The Gender Inequality Index (GII)

This index includes maternal mortality rates (from UNESCO) and women’s parliamentary representation. The Gender Inequality Index (GII) attempts to deal with some of these limitations by adding three new dimensions which reflect women’s reproductive health status, empowerment and labour market participation in comparison to men’s. It also excludes income which is seen to be less relevant in developing countries. The desegregation of data ensures that high achievement in one dimension does not compensate for low achievement in another dimension. The GII value increases as gender inequalities increase. One of the major advantages of the index is seen to be the ability for it to capture the linkages across different dimensions for example schooling and access to work. The GII does not however capture other relevant dimensions such as time-use, access to assets, domestic violence, and local-level empowerment (UNDP 2010 p. 90).
1.4.3 Comparing gender gaps between countries

Gender equality does not depend on the level of income in a society. Poorer countries do not necessarily experience larger gender gaps than wealthy ones. China with average per capita income of 5003 US$ has a GDI of 0.754 whilst Saudi Arabia, where average per capita income is more than twice as much (at 12 266 US$), has a slightly lower GDI (of 0.749). Even amongst poorer countries the extent of gender gaps can vary widely. Whilst per capita incomes in Vietnam and India are broadly comparable (at 2490 US$ and 2812 US$, respectively) the former fares significantly better on GDI (at 0.702 as compared with 0.586). It is not income that makes the difference for gender equality: political commitment and prevailing social and cultural institutions are what matters.

These factors are complex in their operation and even where gender gaps appear relatively small with respect to the key outcomes of life expectancy, literacy and income, there may be serious discrepancies between women and men in other highly significant areas. This is illustrated by the large differences that can occur between a country’s performance with respect to GDI and its score on GEM. Japan, Saudi Arabia and Sri Lanka all perform relatively well with respect to GDI (0.937, 0.749, and 0.747 respectively) but all score relatively poorly with respect to GEM (0.534, 0.253, and 0.370 respectively). Despite good outcomes overall for women with respect to some fundamental dimensions of well-being, that there are serious inequalities in these societies with respect to women’s power in society both politically and economically.

It is important to note in making these kinds of comparisons that GDI can fall as a result of worsening gender gaps but also as a result of worsening human development. This is well illustrated by Tanzania where average per capita income stands at a mere 621 US$ making it the third poorest country for which the UNDP reports data. Its HDI ranks at 128th/140 countries for whom there is gender data and its GDI ranks at 127th/140 countries for which there is data. Although its GDI is relatively low at 0.414 it is in line with its overall level of human development, and both these indicators are relatively good considering Tanzania’s extremely low GDP per capita. The GEM is not closely linked to human development or to income levels and it is interesting that Tanzania’s GEM stands at 0.538 which ranks 42nd/80 countries for which these data exist.


Summary measures offer a useful snapshot that can be filled out with more specific indicators of gender differences that are quantitative. These can build up a detailed picture of the material differences between men and women – the aspects that are tangible and observable. However, they tell us very little about how these gender gaps are created and why they persist over time.

This requires qualitative information about how gendered power relations operate in society to uphold, reinforce and renegotiate discriminatory ideas about gender. These ideas subordinate women to men and can be found at every level – in households, communities, the labour market, formal politics, and wider society. Description of these processes involves not only recording the prevailing ideologies about gender but also exploring how far they are accepted, how they are enforced, where they are resisted, and how far they are being questioned.

Although measuring gender gaps has become central to understanding gender inequality around the world, there is a need to be cautious about interpreting what gender gaps mean. In particular, we need to be careful not to equate the absence of gender gaps with gender equality. There are a number of problems with this approach, which is rooted in Western liberal ways of thinking that may not adequately reflect different value systems. Just as subjective perceptions of poverty have a significant role to play in understanding deprivation, the subjective experiences of women need to be part of any assessment of gender inequality. From
a social development and gender perspective, it is not enough to read off from gender gaps, it is necessary also to ask 'what do these gender gaps mean for the women experiencing them?' This issue is illustrated by the following case study on gender gaps in schooling in South Asia.

1.4.4 Do reductions in gender gaps in schooling mean greater equality?

There is widespread and deep rooted belief that the extension of girls' schooling is a 'silver bullet' that can trigger a whole set of progressive gender changes. In much of South Asia, the apparent decline of preferential investment in boy's schooling has been seen as a mark of growing gender equality and it has been anticipated that this will be reflected in women's greater uptake of economic opportunities and in reduction of the number of children they bear during their lives. However, this view does not consider what schooling means for the girls themselves or for their parents.

There is much evidence in South Asia that many parents keep their girls in school in order to enhance their position in the marriage market. Schooling is regarded as preparation for marriage in an increasingly competitive market — educated grooms require not only an adequate dowry but also an educated wife. In practice, school curricula do little to challenge local gendered notions of family honour and respectability, and girls choose subjects that cultivate desirable wifely qualities such as homemaking and the liberal arts. Parental concerns about family honour fuel notions of adolescent female vulnerability to unmonitored contact with boys and shape both the kinds of educational opportunities that girls and women can pursue and the behavioural expectations of girls and women to conduct themselves respectfully and to safeguard their reputations. In this context we need to be cautious about equating greater schooling for girls with greater equality or freedom for them in society.


There is a tendency in some discussions of gender and development to conflate gender and poverty even though gender discrimination can be found at all levels of wealth and is not caused by poverty. There are, however, complex interactions between gender and poverty. The UK's Department for International Development stresses that progress on the MDGs is slowest in relation to those goals that rely most on improving the status of women and girls. Gendered power relations interact with other power relations in such a way that women experience poverty differently from men and different factors can both make them more vulnerable to poverty and hinder their capacity to escape from poverty. For instance, women are more vulnerable than men to chronic poverty because of gender inequalities in the distribution of resources and gender biases in labour markets. This implies that gender concerns are relevant to efforts to understand and alleviate poverty but that gender equity is wider an objective that is pertinent to both the poor and the non-poor in society.
Make notes on poverty and gender inequality in your country (up to 1500 words).

Use different headings to summarise:

(1) poverty (include the extent of income inequality, the incidence of income poverty, and the multi-dimensional nature of poverty),

(2) current gender inequalities (include both material outcomes and participation in economic and political life),

(3) the key causes of poverty,

(4) the key causes of gender inequality.

Section 1 Self Assessment Questions

Question 1

Which of these statements is valid?

(a) None of the developing regions is likely to meet the poverty goal (MDG 1) in full by 2015.

(b) Absolute poverty is a better measure than relative poverty in developing countries.

(c) Gender gaps are a problem worldwide and will not be eliminated by economic growth or the eradication of poverty.

(d) The reduction in gender gaps in women’s participation in paid work worldwide signals their greater equality in the labour market.

Question 2

Match up the parts of the following Millennium Development Goals.

(a) Eradicate extreme (1) HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
(b) Reduce child (2) gender equality and empower women
(c) Ensure (3) primary education
(d) Achieve universal (4) poverty and hunger
(e) Improve maternal (5) mortality
(f) Combat (6) environmental sustainability
(g) Promote (7) health
2.0 UNDERSTANDING WELL-BEING

Section Overview
The underlying objective of development is the enhancement of human well-being. Although central to development efforts, there is often very little attempt to define exactly what is meant by this.

Section Learning Outcome
By the end of this section students should be able to:

- define theory of well-being

Before you read on, reflect on your own understanding of well-being. What would you suggest development is trying to achieve in terms of how it enhances human well-being? In other words, what kind of impact do you think development tries to make on peoples’ lives?

Well-being can be described as an umbrella term, meaning that a variety of related ideas and concepts shelters under it. In this section we will explore two different approaches to understanding well-being that have been particularly influential for gender and social development thinking. They are the basic needs approach (Sub-section 2.1) and the capabilities approach (Sub-section 2.2). In their different ways, both theories have struggled with the problem of trying to come to a universally valid understanding of well-being that also makes sense in different contexts. The different approaches to understanding well-being suggest different approaches that are needed to enhance well-being.

2.1 Basic needs approach to well-being

Basic needs approaches to well-being are concerned with outcomes. They arose out of recognition that economic approaches to development that focused on incomes and growth were problematic. A narrow economic understanding sees increasing incomes and faster growth as proxies for improved well-being. However, basic needs proponents argue that this depends, firstly, on whether income is spent on satisfying basic needs where there are shortfalls or on luxuries that may ultimately have a detrimental impact on well-being and, secondly, on how income and the positive welfare benefits of increased income are distributed between and within different social groups.

A focus on basic needs looks instead at well-being outcomes, such as whether people are healthy, well nourished, and well educated, and how shortfalls in these well-being outcomes are distributed within society. Basic needs approaches focus on key indicators that are seen as objective assessments of well-being such as longevity, infant survival, body mass index, educational attainment, and so on.

The idea of basic human needs that must be satisfied for development to occur has been enormously influential in development thinking. This approach to enhancing
well-being is focused on ‘ends’ as opposed to ‘means’. A concern with ends translates into a policy concern with making up the shortfalls that the poor experience with respect to their basic needs. It is compatible with a targeted approach aimed at establishing safety nets for those who are most vulnerable with the aim of realising a universal minimum standard of well-being outcomes. The following extract in 2.1.1 summarises the historical influence of basic needs thinking on development policy.

### 2.1.1 Basic needs and development policy

Basic needs thinking reached prominence in the late 1970s when it became a central organising principle for development work in the International Labour Organisation and began to be a focus for some work within the World Bank. This reflected growing concern that the benefits of economic growth in developing countries had not trickled down to the poor in the way that liberal economic theory had predicted. It was a response to the evidence that structural adjustment policies in countries with severe economic crises were having a devastating impact on the poor. UNICEF’s approach of ‘adjustment with a human face’ encouraged the targeting of scarce state support to the poor and vulnerable and shifting public spending towards basic needs provision.

By the mid 1980s basic needs were being forced off the agenda by growing neo-liberal perspectives that saw efficient markets as the key mechanisms for satisfying needs. However, basic needs thinking about well-being remains very influential and has experienced something of a comeback. The World Summit on Social Development at Copenhagen in 1995 and the MDGs both make extensive use of basic needs thinking about well-being and this is reflected in the latter’s focus on survival, health, hunger, safe water and basic education.


Whilst there is some measure of agreement on what basic needs are essential for survival (such as food, water, shelter, health care, and education), there is much less agreement about what basic needs must be fulfilled for well-being to be said to exist.

### 2.2 Capabilities approach to well-being

The capabilities approach can be understood as building upon the foundations of the concept of basic needs. However, Amartya Sen (1999) argued that a proper focus for understanding well-being is on what people can be and can do, rather than simply on what they have. In this way the capabilities approach engages with both objective and subjective perceptions of well-being.

Freedom is integral to Sen’s approach which distinguishes between people’s capabilities (what they can potentially be and do) and what they choose to do with them (their actual functionings). A common example is used to illustrate the importance of distinguishing between functionings and capabilities. Consider a rich and healthy person who, for religious reasons, fasts for a specified period thus temporarily reducing their calorie intake below that considered to be the basic need. Consider also a poor female farmer who does long hours of hard physical work in the fields for low pay and can not afford to buy sufficient food for herself and her children. The rich man had the possibility of being well nourished and chose to fast whilst the poor women was so disadvantaged by the labour market that she had no options. Over the short term at least, the man’s daily calorie intake (his functioning of being well nourished) may have been less than the women but nevertheless his potential (capability) to be well nourished was much greater than hers.
Sen distinguishes between endowments and entitlements. Endowments are the assets that an individual owns such as labour, land, savings, and so on. Entitlements refer to the ability of an individual to translate these assets into goods, for instance, by hiring out their own labour in order to buy food in the market or by growing food on their own land. Entitlements can be thought of as ways of making claims to resources whether it be through social obligations, or political rights or through market exchange. Importantly, entitlements are structured by wider social relations, political structures and market conditions. Sen's famous study of the causes of famine demonstrates the profound significance of entitlements analysis for development policy (see 2.2.1).

2.2.1 Famine and the failure of entitlements

Amartya Sen analysed four famines in the last century: the 1943 Bengal famine, the 1973 famine in Wollo, Ethiopia, the 1974 famine in Bangladesh, and the 1974 famine in Harerghe, Ethiopia. In three of these famines he found that there was no overall problem with food availability, the exception being the 1974 famine in Ethiopia. In each case he found that particular groups were more vulnerable than others to starvation or extreme hunger.

In the Wollo famine, it was farmers who were disproportionately affected. As their own food production failed as a result of drought, many farmers sought paid work and moved to sell their assets. However, the very weak market economy offered little employment and the price of assets plunged as the price of food rose. The Ethiopian government made the situation worse through increasing taxes and requiring people to work on state projects.

Sen concludes that famine in all these cases was caused by a series of entitlement failures. In the Wollo example, this began with a failure of direct entitlements to food (through own production) and got much worse with the failure of exchange entitlements to food (through purchases from income from the sale of labour and assets). It is now well recognised that market exchange may exacerbate or even initiate famine. It follows that what is needed to prevent famine is to strengthen exchange entitlements rather than to focus on production of food alone.


Since 1990, the UNDP has produced a summary indicator called the human development index (HDI) that is a measure of well-being that is widely influential. The UNDP founded their index in Sen’s capabilities approach and it combines measures of the capability of leading a long life (life expectancy), of acquiring knowledge (literacy), and of accessing the resources needed for a decent life (per capita income). The HDI is a highly aggregate index but gives a multi-dimensional measure of well-being that we can readily compare across different situations. However, it is orientated to basic human development, primarily in developing countries, and can not capture much sense of the wider freedoms Sen had in mind. This latter failing may be an inevitable limitation of a single summary measure, although the UNDP have also developed different indices that reflect social justice, political freedoms, and empowerment.

A key difficulty in human need theory has been negotiating an understanding of what constitutes well-being so that it makes sense in the enormous diversity of social, economic, political, and cultural settings. Tensions in this debate include the problems of universalism versus those of cultural relativism and issues of focus on absolute versus relative deprivations. Sen wanted to develop a way of making
international comparisons of well-being that support the case for social justice on the basis of human need. He got around both these problems by constructing universal well-being in terms of locally specified functionings that make up ‘a good life’.

Poor people are deprived both in relation to endowments as well as with respect to entitlements and this combination makes it hard for them to gain secure access to the goods they need in order to survive. In this way, the capabilities approach to well-being focuses on ‘means’ as well as ‘ends’. In terms of inequalities, this directs attention to both unequal outcomes as well as unequal opportunities. A concern with means and ends translates into a policy concern with expanding the resources of the poor as well as improving the terms on which they can access, exchange and use those resources.

The main criticism of Sen’s work is that it is very difficult to operationalise in any comprehensive way. This difficulty arises particularly with respect to measuring capabilities as opposed to functionings and policy research has struggled convincingly to shift the focus away from outcomes. Capabilities thinking has been further criticised, notably by feminists, for its focus on what the individual can be and do as the locus of well-being. These critics argue that more relational aspects of well-being are important throughout people’s lives and often particularly important at certain times, such as for very young children, for new parents or for older people for whom relationships with close family and friends may be especially significant. Despite these criticisms and unresolved challenges, Sen’s ideas effectively underpin much contemporary thinking and offer a more robust conceptual basis for elaborating particular interpretations of well-being than basic needs thinking.

 pedestals

Think about the things that are considered necessary for a ‘good life’ in your own society. Make a conscious effort to think beyond the more obvious material aspects of a good life and to consider what is needed for a person to appear in public without shame in your society.

How do these capabilities vary for women and men? Make brief notes (up to around 500 words).
Section 2 Self Assessment Questions

Question 3

Fill in the missing concepts.

Amartya Sen’s theory of human needs crucially distinguishes between what a person actually does (their _______) and the things that they can potentially do and be (their _______). He draws a second important distinction between the assets an individual can command (his _______) and his ability to translate these assets into goods (his _______).

Question 4

Which of the following are valid?

(a) Targeting social protection at the most vulnerable groups in society can be part of a strategy to guarantee universal minimum standards of human well-being.

(b) There is a crucial well-being difference between a situation where a woman wears a veil because she is prohibited from appearing in public without one and where she does so from her own free will.

(c) Increasing the overall production of food is the most central issue for ensuring that future famines do not occur.
3.0 ANALYSING DEVELOPMENT POLICY APPROACHES

Section Overview
Policy approaches for development can be very broadly analysed in terms of their underlying approach to inequality. In this section, we will introduce some important ways that social development and gender analysis has looked at policy approaches (Section 3.1). Then we will delineate three broad categories of policy approaches: those that have sought to address inequality primarily through tackling efficient growth, through addressing needs or expanding rights (Section 3.2).

Section Learning Outcome
By the end of this section students should be able to:

- recognise different perspectives on social and gender inequalities within policy approaches

3.1 Analysing policy
Development policy often presents itself as technical and scientific but it is, in reality, heavily value-laden. Different policy approaches contain different ideas about what is desirable and how it can be achieved. We can describe them as being normative rather than descriptive. These values are often political, cultural or religious in origin and constitute an ideology. From a social development and gender perspective it is important to make these ideas and their values explicit and to subject them to critical examination.

Normative ideologies provide value frameworks for different development policy approaches. These legitimise certain needs as urgent and as being the valid responsibility of the state. This involves at the same time de-legitimising other needs considered as less urgent or valid. The needs that are recognised as the appropriate focus of development policy are called public needs. In other words, public need is socially constructed and a site of political struggle. Social development and gender analysis is concerned with revealing the power relations behind who decides whose needs are recognised, how these decisions are made and how recognised needs are framed in development policy.

The way in which policy is framed and its underlying values matter because they shape which interventions are seen as being desirable and ultimately affect the outcomes of development policies. This is illustrated in 3.1.1 using the historical case of the evolution of public policy on domestic violence in the United States.

3.1.1 Domestic violence in the United States
Nancy Fraser uses the historical example from the United States of domestic violence to show how the struggle for the recognition of needs is a political process. The term used in public policy for domestic violence now in the US is ‘wife battery’ but this only came into existence in the mid-1970s. Before that violence by husbands against wives was not seriously discussed, appearing only as a subject for comedy. Fraser argues that this reflects the fact that domestic violence was seen as a private matter alongside the widespread acceptance of the physical disciplining of children and servants.
From the mid-1970s feminist activists politicised domestic violence and demanded public support for the victims of domestic violence in the form of temporary women’s shelters, access to jobs paying a family wage, child care, and affordable permanent housing. Their term ‘wife battery’ drew upon existing criminal law and by the late 1970s they had effectively established domestic violence as a legitimate political issue that began to change wider norms and command local government funding.


The way in which poverty and gender inequality are addressed in development policy has an effect on the gendered impacts of policy on different groups in society. It is common in development policy to see social development and gender concerns as particularly relevant to social sector policies, such as those relating to health, education, and social security. However, all public policy has social and gendered impacts even if its aims are not primarily or even remotely related to social or gender goals. Social development and gender analysis attempts to make these hidden impacts visible.

Whilst social policy debates in developed countries have centred on the welfare state and citizenship, in developing countries the resources and reach of states has meant that social policy is comparatively weak. In these contexts comparatively more social welfare is provided outside of the state and market by family and community. Looking at the gendered and social distribution of social provisioning is central to understanding the social and gendered outcomes of development policy. Economic policies have direct and indirect effects on social provisioning and therefore have a profound impact on gender relations and women’s well-being (see 3.1.2).

### 3.1.2 Gendered impacts of macro-economic policies

Dominant approaches to macro-economic development have driven two trends worldwide: labour market restructuring and social sector restructuring.

Deregulation and globalisation has fostered a widespread informality and insecurity of paid work. Opportunities for women’s employment have increased enormously but gendered labour market segmentation means that gender gaps in employment grade, pay and conditions remain widespread and have sometimes increased.

Social sector reforms have rolled back state provisioning, increasingly privatised or introduced markets into social welfare provision. Despite changing policy emphases highlighting primary education and health, there are severe problems of access around cost and the way entitlements may be related to labour market participation in many places. These effectively push social provisioning back into the family or the community where they are primarily the responsibility of women, children, especially girls, and elderly people.

In effect unpaid care, predominantly done by women, and the exploitation inherent in a gender segregated labour market has provided a subsidy for this macro-economic approach.

3.2 Growth, needs or rights?

Different policy approaches disagree on what should be done about poverty and gender inequality. We can make three very broad distinctions between development policy on poverty and gender inequality.

Efficiency-based policy approaches

Efficiency-based policies are those that, put simply, rest on the belief that growth is the ultimate constraint on development and that successful growth will in due course eliminate poverty and gender disparities. Some early development approaches saw poverty and gender inequality as undesirable but believed that they are a problem best solved by focusing on growth itself. More recently, it has been argued that poverty and gender inequalities inhibit efficient economic development and that tackling these inequalities is essential to promoting faster growth. The latter are concerned with promoting pro-poor and gender equitable growth. The World Bank's (2001) report on Engendering Development is an example of a policy document that articulates this view (see 3.2.1).

3.2.1 World Bank's (2001) report on Engendering Development

The World Bank responded comparatively quickly to criticisms of its neo-liberal economic policies from a poverty perspective, but was slow to address gender concerns. But in 2001 the Bank finally presented an explicit policy statement about gender in a report called Engendering Development: Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources and Voice. The report takes the economic framework of the Bank as its starting point and argues that economic development cannot be effectively addressed unless gender inequality is taken into account. The report argues that poverty increases gender inequality and that gender inequality hinders development. It argues that gender inequalities are generated and persist through a number of pathways that include social and institutions, household power relations, economic change and development policy. It recognises that gender requires more than economic growth if gender relations are to be improved and promotes a three pronged strategy to promote equality by:

- reforming institutions to establish equal rights and opportunities for women and men
- fostering economic development to strengthen the incentives for more equal resource and participation
- taking active measures to redress disparities in command over resources and political voice

The report has been criticised on a number of grounds. The report is based on win-win models of a synergistic relationship between gender and growth. However, gender disparities are present even amongst wealthy people in wealthy societies, growth has occurred in spite of gender inequalities and has in some cases even exacerbated gender gaps. The report tends to conflate gender and poverty and places undue emphasis on extending economic opportunities to women when other constraints in their lives may be equally significant barriers to greater equality. Ultimately, the report has been viewed by many as creating some space for gender without jeopardising the overall primacy of the goal of economic development.


Needs-based policy approaches

Needs based policy is orientated towards enhancing human development rather than growth. It is concerned with enabling everyone in society to achieve their minimum
basic needs and, over time, with rising prosperity, to raise that minimum level. From this point of view growth is the means to the end of human development: growth is important in so far as it contributes to enhancing human development. Concern at the slow progress of development in addressing basic human needs underpins the current consensus on poverty reduction.

This policy consensus emerged from the widespread recognition of the failures of the Washington Consensus advocated by the international financial organisations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in the mid-1980s. The emphasis on the market as a universally efficient mechanism of promoting growth, combined with a push for deregulation of markets and the widespread reform and reduction of state bureaucracies created serious pressures on poor people and saw key indicators of human development stagnate or even fall in some settings. The Post-Washington Consensus dates from the mid-1990s and is still evolving. However, its enduring themes include (a) a focus on poverty reduction, (b) recognition of the need for delivery of social services such as education and health by government and civil society organisations, (c) advocacy for greater ownership of development initiatives by aid-recipient countries, and (d) a belief in good governance and empowerment as mechanisms that can both enhance the responsiveness and efficiency of government to citizen needs and improve the efficient and effective operation of markets.

The umbrella of needs-based policies includes a range of positions on the issue of inequality. Some place great emphasis on distributional issues and their importance for social cohesion. Here inequality is seen as threatening the apparent legitimacy of democratic institutions because it fuels resentment, crime, violence, and insecurity. Others focus more on the urgency of addressing absolute deprivations without seeing any redistribution of resources or power as necessary for this to occur.

Similarly with the definition of needs, some see basic human needs as fairly self-evident with a role for participation in creating ownership whilst others see empowerment as centrally about defining what needs are to be prioritised.

An important element of this approach is the argument that economic growth is needed both to increase resources available to the state, to other organisations and to individuals in social provisioning to meet the basic needs of those who cannot meet such needs for themselves, and (through increased employment and productivity) to reduce the numbers and proportion of people requiring such social provisioning.

Rights-based policy approaches

Rights-based approaches focus on three sets of concerns, namely freedom, well-being, and dignity. In 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted and today the majority of the conventions on civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights and those on labour rights have been ratified by over 125 countries around the world. These rights do not just involve protection or ‘negative rights’, such as freedom from fear, but also require positive action to promote ‘positive rights’, such as freedom from want. The key international human rights are summarised in 3.2.2.
3.2.2 International human rights

International commitment to human freedom recognises the equality of all people and establishes the realisation of human rights as a collective goal of humanity. The Universal Declaration identifies a comprehensive range of rights and creates an international system for establishing international law, establishing states accountability for their human rights obligations and for monitoring performance. The key rights are summarised by UNDP as:
- Freedom from discrimination
- Freedom from want
- Freedom to develop and realise one’s human potential
- Freedom from fear
- Freedom from injustice and violations of the rule of law
- Freedom of thought, speech, association and participation in decision-making
- Freedom for decent work without exploitation


In many developing countries, legal reform has little impact on the day-to-day lives of poor men and women. A useful distinction for social development and gender analysis is between formal rights, those enshrined in law, and substantive rights, those enjoyed in practice. Enlarging substantive rights involves strengthening entitlements. These cannot be simply legislated but require the redistribution of power and resources in society.

Until recently, efforts to realise human rights have run somewhat in parallel with efforts around human development. However, the 1990s saw a convergence of thinking and it is now widely recognised that human rights approaches are central to improving the way in which citizens can demand good governance from their states. Increasingly donors are putting pressure for progress to be made on human rights and good governance as a condition for support in meeting basic needs.

At the same time rights have become integral to the ways in which some development policy approaches reach out to and work with the most deprived groups in society. In terms of approaches to well-being, it represents an opportunity more meaningfully to address freedoms as well as capabilities. The following case study on maternal health illustrates how rights-based approaches can be used to enhance existing initiatives.

3.2.3 Rights-based approaches to reducing maternal deaths

The UK’s Department for International Development has a Maternal Health Strategy of which one component focuses on advocating for rights-based approaches to maternal health policy in DFID’s own work and that of their international and national partners. DFID argues that a rights and equity perspective adds value to public health and health systems approaches because reducing maternal deaths is not just a matter of technical action. Rather, tackling maternal health involves challenging the status quo within and beyond the health sector. They focus on ways of strengthening support for maternal health at the levels of policy-making and formal politics; on using a rights perspective to enhancing health system; on improving women’s access to and entitlements to claim maternal healthcare; on improving governmental accountability for maternal health; and on integrating a rights perspective into aid instruments.

It is only relatively recently that rights-based approaches have been prioritised by mainstream donors, but it is evident that there are particular tensions as well as opportunities that occur in taking rights-based thinking on board. These arise in part from taking an approach rooted in political activism into the institutional environment of development policy. The latter is orientated towards technocratic planning and must position its actions as non-political for diplomatic reasons. This often means that translating rights thinking into rights-based approaches for development involves stripping it of its most potent content. One aspect of this is that the language of universality that is central to rights has presented obstacles to focusing particular attention on those who are most disadvantaged in society.

Find an example of a development policy, such as a national strategy for education or rural development. Try to assess what kind of approach it takes to poverty and gender. How far does the policy recognise poverty and gender dimensions? What are its objectives with respect to poverty and gender? How does it seek to achieve these objectives? Can you categorise the approach as predominantly efficiency, needs or rights based?
Section 3 Self Assessment Questions

Question 5

Which of the following statements is valid?

(a) The World Bank responded early on to criticisms that its neo-liberal policies exacerbated gender inequalities by transforming its economic paradigm.

(b) Identifying the needs that development policy will address is a technical matter independent of politics.

(c) Rights-based approaches to development are relevant to developing countries despite resource constraints and the remoteness of legal processes from everyday lives of poor men and women.

Question 6

Match the following phrases.

(a) The Washington Consensus  
(i) emphasises that the market is most efficient at promoting economic growth and advocates deregulation and rolling back of the state

(b) The Post-Washington Consensus  
(ii) emphasises greater equity and better entitlements are essential to enhance freedoms as well as capabilities through development

(c) The Rights-Based Approach  
(iii) emphasises poverty reduction, the provision of basic social services, and improved governance
**Unit Summary**

In this unit we have introduced key ideas about global inequalities in poverty and gender, different ways of understanding these inequalities, and different ways in which development seeks to address them through policy.

In Section 1 we began by looking at the likelihood that many of the Millennium Development Goals will not be achieved in developing countries because of pervasive inequalities and, particularly, gender inequality. We looked in some detail at different ways of understanding poverty and examined differences in their perceptions of what causes poverty. We then looked at different ways of understanding gender inequalities and similarly explored different views of what causes gender gaps. Whilst gender concerns are important for a better understanding of poverty, gender inequalities affect those who are not poor as well as those who are poor.

In Section 2, we introduced two influential ways of understanding well-being in developing countries: the Basic needs approach and the Capabilities approach. We showed how these point towards different sorts of interventions to address poverty.

In Section 3, we introduced the idea of analysing policy by making explicit its values and assumptions about inequality. Policy is socially constructed and gendered and the implications of this can be analysed by looking at how it is framed. We drew attention to how three broad kinds of approaches to development policy addressed concerns of poverty and gender. These were efficiency-based approaches, needs-based approaches, and rights-based approaches.
UNIT SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Question 1

What are single summary measures of poverty, gender inequality, and human development useful for and in what ways are they limited?

Question 2

Match the appropriate statement with each region. You may use each statement several times.

(i) likely to meet only part of the poverty eradication goal
(ii) on track to meeting the poverty eradication goal in full
(iii) set to miss the poverty reduction target

(a) Sub-Saharan Africa is
(b) West Asia and Central Asia are
(c) South Asia is
(d) Latin America and the Caribbean are
(e) East Asia and South East Asia are

Question 3

Does it really matter how we look at poverty or gender gaps if there is agreement on the priority of reducing them?
# Key Terms and Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>absolute poverty</strong></td>
<td>absolute deprivation of basic human needs. Commonly characterised in developing countries as an income of less than a dollar a day</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>basic needs</strong></td>
<td>the minimum material and non-material needs required to sustain a decent standard of living</td>
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<td><strong>capabilities</strong></td>
<td>the potential people have to be or do different things</td>
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<td><strong>chronic poverty</strong></td>
<td>the experience of poverty for all or most of a lifetime</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>endowments</strong></td>
<td>the assets that an individual can command</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>entitlements</strong></td>
<td>the ability of an individual to translate assets into goods</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>formal rights</strong></td>
<td>rights that are enshrined in law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>functionings</strong></td>
<td>the things that people choose to achieve or do with their capabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender and Development Index (GDI)</strong></td>
<td>a single summary measure that combines the gender gaps that exist in the HDI variables of life expectancy, literacy, and GDP per capita</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)</strong></td>
<td>a single summary measure that combines women’s participation in political decision-making, their access to professional opportunities and their earning power</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>horizontal planning</strong></td>
<td>horizontal planning refers to interventions that may cut across a number of sectors that interlink. For instance, the linkages between the health sector and sanitation or indeed the links between treating disease and disease prevention. Horizontal planning integrates these sectors both at the planning, intervention, and evaluation stages of a programme. Thus horizontal planning (and financing) may cut across more than one sector.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Human Development Index (HDI)</strong></td>
<td>a single summary measure of human development that combines life expectancy, literacy and GDP per capita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human Poverty Index 1 (HPI-1)</strong></td>
<td>a single summary measure of poverty for developing countries that combines deprivations in a long and healthy life, deprivations in knowledge, and deprivations in access to a decent standard of living</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ideology</strong></td>
<td>a system of ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>relative poverty</strong></td>
<td>deprivation in human needs relative to the standards prevailing in a particular context. Commonly characterised in developing countries as an income of 50% or 60% of average national disposable income</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>social exclusion</strong></td>
<td>the process by which certain groups of individuals are excluded from participating fully in the life of the society in which they live</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>substantive rights</strong></td>
<td>rights that are enjoyed in practice</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>transient poverty</strong></td>
<td>the experience of poverty which people move in and out of during their lifetime</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>vertical planning</strong></td>
<td>generally refers to specific interventions within a specific sector, for instance the health sector. An example of this would be the provision of specific resources such as medical equipment, staffing, training, and evaluation in a particular area of health.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>vulnerability</strong></td>
<td>being at particular risk from shocks or stresses and being more likely to become poor as a result of shocks or stresses</td>
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<td><strong>well-being</strong></td>
<td>there are different definitions of well-being within human needs theory, however, a common reference point is that well-being is about being able to maintain a decent standard of living and being able to participate in society without shame</td>
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