



Maitreyee

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Dear HDCA Member,

The question of how to ‘operationalize’ the capability approach, how to put its insights into practice, remains at the core of the approach. The topic was the focus of the first conference on the capability approach in Cambridge, UK, in June 2001 and the ‘operationalisation’ question has been a central feature of all conferences thereafter.

The capability approach is a normative framework for assessing states of affairs. It states that wellbeing evaluation should be in the space of capabilities. But how to measure capabilities and the idea of positive freedom contained therein? Does this entail consequences for policy and public action? How to frame public policies which remain faithful in capturing the idea of the capability approach – that all actions should aim at expanding the ‘capabilities that people have reason to choose and value’?

This issue of *Maitreyee* reproduces some key survey articles on the issue. In ‘Using the Capability Approach’, Sabina Alkire explores some challenges that the approach faces when used to offer solutions to poverty and injustice. Ingrid Robeyns reviews the different ways in which the capability approach has been put into practice. In policy circles, the capability approach is more known under the name of the human development approach. Seeta Prahbu discusses the core principles of human development – efficiency, participation and empowerment and sustainability – and how these can be used in development programming.

Two concrete ways of operationalising the capability approach in the context of industrialized nations are discussed. For the first time in history, a report has been published on the state of the American nation from the perspective of the human development and capability approach. The Measure of America examines the wellbeing of Americans as measured by indicators of capabilities and not income. The United Kingdom has also witnessed efforts at using the capability approach into the heart of public policy. The Equality Review, an initiative to monitor inequality, is a clear illustration of the usefulness of concepts of ‘capabilities’ and ‘agency’ for policy-making.

As always, we welcome your comments, suggestions and contributions. Our next two issues of *Maitreyee* will be on gender.

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Using the Capability Approach¹

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The focal question of the Conference that gave rise to this volume was how Amartya Sen's capability approach, which appears to have captured the interest of many, could be put to use in confronting poverties and injustices systematically and at a significant level. The often-discussed issue beneath that question is whether the research sparked by the capability approach gives rise to more effective practical methodologies to address pressing social problems. Of course ensuing applications are not the only grounds on which to examine a proposition – its theoretical implications, its measurability, or its conceptual coherence might also be fruitfully examined, for example. The extent to which specific applications and techniques embody the conceptual approach – their accuracy and limitations – might also be of interest. But in the context of poverty and justice it would appear directly relevant to evaluate concrete applications and consequences, whatever else we also examine. Such a sharp focus might generate anxiety. For even if income approaches to poverty reduction shed but a pale light on the subject, it may be that, after scrutiny, we must concede that the capability approach in practice can do no better – or, perhaps, that we do not yet know.

Yet this seems a necessary question. Many have been attracted to the 'promise' that the capability approach and *Development as Freedom* seem to hold. Some writings assert its benefits (at times with rather more enthusiasm than evidence) or suggest that the approach be extended in a particular direction, or respond to certain pressing questions. The studies in this volume often demonstrate a more constructive and proactive tack. They view the capability approach as a work in progress, develop various applications of it, critically examine which insights various techniques embody, and/or debate whether and how these analyses demonstrably differ from alternative approaches. If this matter-of-fact methodology is adopted, it does not matter one whit whether the authors of such research were ostensibly 'critical of' Sen's capability approach or appeared to harbor some affection for it. The value-added of the capability approach in comparison with alternative approaches would be (or fail to be) evident in the empirical analyses and applications and policies to which it gives rise – indeed in the capabilities that were (or were not) expanded. The proof would be in the pudding.

While the demand for exquisite pudding seems inexhaustible, the demand for a more robust approach to poverty reduction is not too feeble either. There seems to be a confluence of political and intellectual forces seeking to advance development activities in ways not unsympathetic to the capability approach. For example some development agencies, NGOs, and governments are sustaining their support for the Millennium Declaration and associated Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – in which poverty is defined as multidimensional, and encompasses a range of functionings rather than income alone. Some national poverty reduction strategies are harnessing democratic public debate about priorities and processes, and including the poor in the debate. Some direct poverty reduction activities seek to empower poor persons to be active agents in social and political structures, as well as within the home. However imperfect the initiatives are that advance the MDGs, democratic practices, or empowerment (for example), they signal that there might be a demand for

¹ This is the first section of the introductory chapter 'Using the Capability Approach: Prospective and Evaluative Analyses' published in Sabina Alkire and Mozaffar Qizilbash (eds), *The Capability Approach: Concepts, Measures and Applications* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). We thank Cambridge University Press for kind permission for reproduction of this extract in *Maitreyee*.

adequate applications of the capability approach. Further, they signal the value of using the approach well, lest the practical applications settle for something less.

However, the focal question is actually quite difficult to assess: *does* the research sparked by the capability approach give rise to more effective practical methodologies to address significant social problems. More to the point, *the question might be mistakenly construed*. The difficulty in part relates to the different views of what in fact the capability approach *is* – for there are broader and narrower interpretations of it – and what aspects of it various applications or techniques instantiate. It also overlooks some lacunae in the approach, where it needs to borrow from other areas of research or where cross-fertilization with parallel new literature has not yet taken place. But most of all, the question, in the commonly articulated way that I have phrased it, is not actually an appropriate question for *assessing* the capability approach – at least not when this is understood as an evaluative framework. Rather, the question is, itself, a fundamental *application* of the capability approach. A primary evaluative role of the capability approach is precisely to assess which of two states of affairs have expanded human freedoms to a greater extent or what kinds of freedoms they have, respectively, expanded (or contracted). Is the capability approach a baker or a taster; a pudding-maker, or the puddings' judge?

How has the Capability Approach been put into Practice?¹

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This article provides a brief and partial survey of relatively recent attempts to put the capability approach into practice.² What kind of questions can be and have been answered using this framework? Do we have any evidence that the capability approach is making a difference to empirical studies or policy evaluations, or is having an impact as the basis for a critique of social arrangements?

Three theoretical specifications

The capability approach is a broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual wellbeing and social arrangements, the design of policies, and proposals about societal change. It can be used to empirically assess aspects of an individual's or groups' well-being, such as inequality or poverty. It can also be used as an alternative to mainstream cost-benefit analysis, or as a framework to develop and evaluate policies, ranging from welfare state design in affluent societies, to development policies by governments and non-governmental organisations in developing countries. It can also be used as a normative basis for social and political criticism. The capability approach is not a theory that can *explain* poverty, inequality or well-being; instead, it provides concepts and a framework that can help to *conceptualize* and *evaluate* these phenomena.

The capability approach in practice comes in a variety of forms, in part because of the wide scope of the approach, but also because the approach is radically *underspecified*: there are a number of theoretical lacunae that can be filled in a variety of ways. How one makes these

¹ This is an extract of an article that appeared in the *Journal of Political Philosophy*, Volume 14, Number 3, 2006, pp. 351-76. It has been condensed by Séverine Deneulin.

² In recent years the applied capability literature has been booming, and hence there have been a significant number of post-2006 applications that are not included in this survey.

specifications depends in part on the kind of theory (for example, a theory of justice, or a theory of welfare economics), or the kind of application (for example, a critique on existing social practices, or a measurement exercise), but it also depends in part on particular normative and epistemological assumptions. Three theoretical specifications have emerged from the literature as particularly important: the choice between functionings and capabilities, the selection of relevant capabilities, and the issue of weighting the different capabilities for an overall assessment (also known as the question of indexing or trade-offs).

The capability approach in practice

How has the capability approach been put into practice? It is important to stress that not all applications of the capability approach require *empirical* research techniques. Some applications are based on analytical reasoning or critical analysis. But many applications of the capability approach do rest on new empirical analysis, and therefore require the use of empirical research techniques. Not surprisingly, given the wide scope of capability applications and the highly multi- and interdisciplinary character of this literature, a wide variety of empirical research techniques have been used (Kuklys, 2005). The main measurement techniques that have been explored so far are descriptive statistics of single indicators, scaling, fuzzy sets theory, factor analysis, principle component analysis, and structural equation modelling. Before embarking on a review of the actual applications, let us ask how the quantitative applications deal with the above theoretical specifications.

The first observation is that virtually all the quantitative applications are using existing datasets. None of these data have been collected with the aim of measuring functionings. While most of these surveys are very rich in the range of domains on which they include information, these data are not collected with the aim of capturing people's functionings wellbeing, let alone their capabilities. The second and third theoretical specifications discussed above have been dealt with in more detail in the measurement literature. If an empirical application employs descriptive analysis, scaling, or fuzzy sets theory, both the selection of relevant functionings and the choice of the relative weights can be theoretically underpinned. But unfortunately, most measurement studies do not spend any time explaining and scrutinizing the normative underpinnings of the statistical techniques they use, and are writing for a narrow readership of fellow econometricians and statisticians.

Some studies have also used qualitative empirical techniques. Alkire (2002) has used participatory methods both for the selection of the functionings, and also for the assessment of well-being changes. Qualitative methods have also been used in a recent study on deprivation in affluent societies by Wolff and de-Shalit (2007). In order to find out which capabilities are important to assess the wellbeing of the disadvantaged in society, they conducted interviews with disadvantaged people, but also with the 'experts' who are dedicated to improving their quality of life.

How has the capability approach been applied? I now proceed to describing some of the questions that have been addressed using the capability approach, grouped under the different themes that the capability approach in practice has covered so far:

- *General assessments of the human development of countries:* Sen (1985) pointed out that while the GNP per capita of Brazil and Mexico was more than seven times the GNP per capita of India, China and Sri Lanka, functionings performance in terms of life expectancy, infant mortality and child death rates was most favourable in Sri Lanka, better in China than in India, and better in Mexico than in Brazil. Since 1990, the UNDP has adopted such basic insights from the capability approach in its annual *Human Development Reports*.

- *Assessing small-scale development projects*: Alkire (2002) developed a capability analysis as an alternative for standard cost-benefit analyses of three poverty reduction projects in Pakistan: goat rearing, female literacy classes, and rose garland production. She assessed these projects in terms of how capability-enhancing they were, and compared her evaluations with standard monetary evaluations.
- *Identifying the poor in developing countries*: Several quantitative empirical studies have investigated, both in micro and macro settings, how many functionings-poor people there are, and whether they are the same people identified by an income-poverty measure. The majority of these poverty studies use household surveys, and focus on one country only (Ruggeri Laderchi, 1999; Klasen, 2000; Qizilbash, 2002)
- *Poverty and wellbeing assessment in advanced economies*: Several studies have investigated the number and demographic profile of the poor in advanced economies, or have assessed well-being trends. Alessandro Balestrino (1996) analyzed whether a sample of officially poor people are functionings-poor (that is, education, nutrition or health failure), income poor, or both.³ Shelley Phipps (2002) made a comparison of the wellbeing of children in Canada, Norway and the USA, using equivalent household incomes and ten functionings.
- *Deprivation of disabled people*: Disabled people suffer from at least two types of material disadvantages: they earn less income than the non-disabled, and because of their special needs they need more income to achieve similar functionings, for example to buy a wheelchair. The first disadvantage would be captured by any standard monetary income comparison, but the second would not. Zaidi and Burchardt (2005) make use of standard techniques in welfare economics to account for the fact that the disabled are disadvantaged in converting income into material wellbeing.
- *Assessing gender inequalities*: In his first set of empirical illustrations of how he envisioned the capability approach in practice, Sen (1985) examined gender discrimination in India. He found that females have worse achievements than males for a number of functionings, including age-specific mortality rates, malnutrition and morbidity. The capability approach has also been used to assess gender inequality in advanced economies (Chiappero-Martinetti, 2003; Robeyns, 2003).
- *Debating policies*: The capability approach has also been used to discuss and empirically assess policies, such as educational policies or the principles for welfare state reform. For example, Schokkaert and Van Ootegem (1990) showed that compensating the Belgian unemployed for their income-loss does not help in alleviating all their functionings deprivations.
- *Critiquing and assessing social norms, practices and discourses*: For example, a social norm may induce certain behaviour that restricts people's capability sets or privileges some group's capabilities at the expense of other groups. Or certain claims made in public discourse may be criticized if one broadens the informational basis, or if one shifts the focus from purely material resources to a broad range of capabilities
- *Functionings and capabilities as concepts in non-normative research*: The concepts of functionings and capabilities can also be used in a non-normative setting, for example in ethnographic research, or as concepts in explanatory analysis.

In addition to these nine different types of capability applications, there are also a very large number of studies that look at one specific capability, such as education or health or nutrition.

³ See Anand and van Hees (2006) for an application of the capability approach in the UK context.

These studies often challenge a more narrow economic efficiency-rational by pointing at the (unintended) side effects of particular policies on people's capabilities.

Concluding remarks

What do we conclude from this survey? Putting the capability approach into practice is not a straightforward exercise, since the capability approach is radically underspecified. The capability applications surveyed in this article indicated that current applications of the capability approach arrive at different measurement results and evaluations than the standard approaches that focus on income-based metrics. In addition, the theoretical framework also offers different foundations for policy proposals, and can be a helpful component in the critique of social norms, practices and arrangements. However, caution is needed: the capability approach still struggles with some problems that other evaluative frameworks face, and should not be seen as a framework that is superior to other frameworks in each and every application. Instead, its relative usefulness often depends on the kind of question being addressed. Moreover, capability applications should in many cases not be seen as supplanting other approaches, but instead as providing complementary insights to the more established approaches.

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Operationalising Human Development: A Programmatic Approach¹

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Human development is a broad approach that is about enlarging the range of people's choices. It focuses on enhancing capabilities and freedoms and furthers the agency aspect of individuals. The approach has had far reaching impact on development thinking.

A 'New York Consensus' on operationalising the human development paradigm was proposed, building on four policy elements of:

- pro-poor economic growth,
- accelerating social progress,
- expanding political freedoms and participation through political reforms, and
- accelerating economic and institutional reforms to improve the global environment for poor countries.

This provides a very useful framework.

There are also several initiatives across the globe in evidence based policy making using the Human Development Reports. These may, however, need to be supplemented with a more specific articulation of how one integrates the human development approach in programmes at the operational level. Being able to apply the human development approach in a systematic way to programmes can enhance their on the ground as they break the silos in which government departments and ministries work. The adoption of a more holistic approach can change in fundamental ways the development strategies of governments as well as other actors such as the private sector and civil society.

Examples of using HD

We could take two areas - poverty reduction and democratic governance which are critical for human development attainments and also the areas in which several bilateral and multilateral agencies are actively supporting programmes across countries.

In poverty reduction, for example, the question of equity could lead to advocating for pro-poor, employment led growth and ensuring particularly for women and marginalized sections of the population the access to land, and credit as a right. The simultaneous emphasis on efficiency would imply that measures to enhance productivity in sectors that provide the poor with livelihoods, e.g. small scale agriculture and micro enterprises, as well as ensuring better coordination of efforts by national governments to address multi-dimensional poverty would be critical. The interventions also need to be efficient in enlarging the choices people have and therefore it is essential to identify choices, examine their pros and cons before embarking on programmes to support them. Attention to participation and empowerment would mean not only involving the poor in design and in implementation, but also ensuring broad-based ownership of poverty reduction initiatives by all the actors, viz., the government, local bodies, private sector and civil society. Sustainability considerations need to be addressed not only in terms of environmental sustainability, but also with respect to growth being rapid enough to reduce absolute poverty and equitable enough to reduce relative poverty and inequalities.

In the realm of democratic governance, the same principles can be applied, although the interventions would be different. Equity could be translated at the very least into creation of a participatory and enabling environment for the poor and adherence to the rule of law. Efficiency/productivity is reflected in the effective functioning of all the actors, particularly

¹ This article appeared as HD Insight, issue 13, available at http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdinsights_oct2007.pdf.

government, with respect to implementation and facilitation of pro-poor initiatives. The capability of the government to spend resources meaningfully and towards attainment of pro-poor goals, and the performance of civil service in implementing pro-poor policies could also be good indicators. Emphasis on participation would imply the involvement of all actors in development. Promoting policy dialogue, decentralization, and building effective public-private-community partnerships can be tools to ensure participation. Ensuring sustainability could be achieved through capacity development, integrating governance concerns into all initiatives of development and promoting democratic values and systems.

Human development beyond UNDP

The human development is based on principles which are specifically aimed at providing support to programmatic interventions. Anyone who believes in the human development approach and its values could adapt these interventions to their purpose. However, the principles of human development are integral to the approach and they need to be adhered to simultaneously. Paying attention to equity at the expense of efficiency, participation and empowerment and sustainability will be self-defeating as will the effort to ensure efficiency without attention being paid to the other three aspects.

Implementing human development principles does not go without constraints. The main constraints would be those of time and institutional capacity. Capacity development would need to be an important measure to ensure mainstreaming of human development. Financial resources may also be limited to implement a strategy which requires paying attention to all four principles simultaneously. But these issues are not insurmountable given the commitment to a people-centred development approach.

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The Measure of America

Extracts from the American Human Development Report 2008-2009

Additional excerpts can be accessed at <http://measureofamerica.org>.

Economists, politicians, journalists, and ordinary citizens have many ways to track how America is doing. Monitoring the stock market, watching real estate prices, keeping an eye on interest rates—to follow these figures is to see how the country is progressing in one way or another. But we all have a harder time when trying to look at the big picture: on the whole, are things getting better or worse, and for whom? To answer these questions and to gauge how they stack up compared to their neighbors, countries worldwide have embraced an idea that captures key dimensions of national well-being in one framework: human development.

It has been eighteen years since the UN Development Programme published the first Human Development Report. In the nearly two decades since then, journalists, policy makers, governments, and the global development community have made important use of these studies—more than five hundred in all—on nations and regions around the world. What is new, however, and perhaps somewhat unexpected, is a Human Development Report on the United States.

Yet as the American Human Development Report itself confirms, the human development concept is as relevant and applicable to the home of the world's largest economy as it is to the home of the smallest. The indicators most frequently deployed in evaluating public welfare in the United States—GDP, the Dow Jones and NASDAQ, consumer spending, and the like—only address one aspect of the American experience. The human development model emphasizes the broader, everyday experience of ordinary people, including the economic, social, legal, psychological, cultural, environmental, and political processes that shape the range of options available to us. This approach has gained support around the world as a valuable tool in analyzing the well-being of large population groups.

The report and its American Human Development Index contain a host of useful data on economic, social, political, military, and environmental issues. However, both the report and the index emphasize three core areas of well-being: living a long and healthy life, having access to knowledge, and enjoying a decent standard of living. All data come from official U.S. government sources. (The most recent year for which all data needed to calculate the index are available is 2005.)

The American Human Development Index provides a single measure of well-being for all Americans, disaggregated by state and congressional district, as well as by gender, race, and ethnicity. Overall, for example, Connecticut ranks first among states on the index, and Mississippi ranks last. The American HD Index registers a thirty-year gap in human development between the two states. Among the nation's 436 congressional districts, New York's Fourteenth District, in New York City, ranks first, and California's Twentieth District, around Fresno, ranks last. The average resident of New York's Fourteenth District earns over three times as much as the average resident of California's Twentieth District, lives four and a half years longer, and is ten times as likely to have a college degree. By gender and ethnicity, Asian males have the highest human development score; African American males the lowest. The human development gap between the two groups is a staggering fifty years. In other meaningful ways, as well, the American Human Development Index shows great variation among states and congressional districts, among racial/ethnic groups, and between women and men.

Based on the data in the American Human Development Index and the information and analysis in the American Human Development Report, a steady, broad-based advance of human development in the United States will require attention to several priorities:

- For Americans to live longer, healthier lives, it is obvious from the report that progress depends in large part on a comprehensive resolution of the problem of health insurance. Today, some 47 million Americans lack health insurance, risking negative health outcomes and shorter life spans. The nation appears unlikely to make significant strides in health until every American has adequate health coverage. In addition, Americans are at risk from a wide range of preventable causes of death and disease, including obesity and violence. In a reflection of how complex social problems are linked, researchers have found that poor parents, living in neighborhoods they perceive to be dangerous, are often reluctant to allow their children to play outside. Lack of exercise contributes to childhood obesity, which lowers health scores. Restricted space to play can also have a negative impact on school performance, lowering education scores.
- In order to improve access to knowledge, research suggests that intensive intervention in early childhood is necessary to break the pattern by which parents with limited education raise children with limited education—short-circuiting their ability to command decent opportunities and wages in a high-tech, information-intensive, globalized economy. Superior preschool programs and intensive elementary schooling can offer students from poor families a chance to fulfill their potential, seize opportunities, and lead lives they value. The ideal of American opportunity, grounded in equal access to public education, is threatened by the lopsided educational realities of American schools. In addition, we are asking our schools to solve society's most intractable problems—social exclusion, chronic unemployment, dangerous neighborhoods, and more.
- For Americans to sustain, or obtain, a decent standard of living, the wages and opportunities of millions of Americans must improve. Growing inequality in income distribution and wealth raises a profound question for Americans: Can the uniquely middle-class nation that emerged in the twentieth century survive into the twenty-first century? Or is it fracturing into a land of great extremes?

The answers to these questions will determine not only the future of America, but also the future of the idea of America—that of a land of opportunity where those who work hard and live honestly can prosper in freedom and security. The American Dream has drifted beyond the reach of many, while fading from view among others. To reinvigorate it, to make it real for millions of middle-class and poor Americans, the stagnation and decline of middle and low incomes must be reversed, and opportunity must once again reach down to the lowest rungs of society. It may well be too late to help the generation of Americans who have just come of age. But a debate is long overdue on just how many generations America is willing to waste. We hope this American Human Development Report and American Human Development Index will help prod and inform that important discussion

The Measure of America: American Human Development Report, 2008-2009, published by Columbia University Press, is written by Sarah Burd-Sharps, Kristen Lewis, and Eduardo Borges Martins with forewords by Amartya Sen and William Draper III. The book is available through amazon.com.

The website features an interactive map program that enables you to create and print maps of over 60 indicators by U.S. state or congressional district, a 'Well-O-Meter' to calculate your personal Human Development Index and more. <http://measureofamerica.org>.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission in Britain: Developing an Equality Measurement Framework¹

The establishment of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) in Britain in October 2007 provided an opportunity to introduce a new equality concept and way of measuring equality that is appropriate for the needs of a multicultural democracy in the 21st century. The EHRC is a publicly-funded body, independent from government, with statutory responsibility for monitoring and promoting equality and human rights in Britain. It brings together and integrates the mandates of the pre-existing equality bodies (covering ethnicity, gender and disability) and combines them with responsibilities covering additional equality strands (age, sexual orientation, transgender status, and religion and belief) and human rights.

The new single equality concept is based on the capability approach and directly focuses on the central and valuable things in life that people can actually *do* and *be*. It takes explicit account of the equality characteristics for which the EHRC is given explicit responsibility in the 2006 Equality Act (age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation transgender status) and the perspective of human rights. The Commission has a legal duty to monitor and evaluate progress towards equality and human rights, and to this end it has been developing, with others, an Equality Measurement Framework (EMF).

The development of the EMF has drawn on three key inputs: the theoretical underpinning of the capability approach; the international human rights framework; and extensive consultation with the general public, individuals and groups at risk of discrimination and disadvantage.

The single equality concept

The EHRC consulted internally and externally to ensure the language used and ideas contained in the single equality concept were readily understandable and relevant to the Commission. The ‘Single Equality Concept’ is stated as follows:

An equal society protects and promotes the central and valuable freedoms and real opportunities of each person, securing human rights for all and ensuring that no-one is unfairly disadvantaged.

In an equal society, central and valuable freedoms and real opportunities are not unconstrained but are limited by the need to guarantee the same freedoms and opportunities for all.

In an equal society, institutions and individuals respect the diversity of people and their goals, address their different needs and situations, and remove the barriers that limit what people can do and can be.

The concept has a number of advantages. It is in plain English, making it easier for people to use and explain to others, it recognises diversity and reflects current disadvantage, not just aspirations. It incorporates responsibility and obligations of individuals and institutions and includes human rights in a way that explains what the term means. It clarifies the connection between individuals’ values and freedom for everyone and includes the concept of fairness.

Aspects of inequality

To reflect this concept of equality, the EMF incorporates three distinct aspects of inequality that can arise between individuals and groups:

- *Inequality of outcome*: inequality in the central and valuable things in life that individuals and groups actually achieve;

¹ Adapted from Tania Burchardt and Polly Vizard (2008), Equality and Human Rights Commission: Equality Measurement Framework Briefing Note, http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/case/_new/research/equality/publications.asp

- *Inequality of autonomy*: inequality in the degree of independence people have to make decisions affecting their lives, how much choice and control they really have given their circumstances;
- *Inequality of process*: this reflects inequalities in treatment through discrimination or disadvantage by other individuals and groups, or by institutions and systems.

This means that in developing and applying the EMF, information about unequal outcomes will be considered alongside information about inequalities in autonomy - who did the choosing, the adequacy of the options available, and whether the outcomes would have been chosen, given real choice - and information about inequalities in process - whether there is discrimination, or other aspects of unequal treatment, such as a lack of dignity and respect.

The substantive freedom concept provides a good basis for thinking about inequality because it covers the three distinct aspects - outcomes, autonomy and process. It is not sufficient to have equality of outcome without choices, or in the absence of fair treatment, dignity and respect. They are all distinct aspects of inequality that will be evaluated and tracked through the measurement framework, by EHRC and others.

The list of 10 central and valuable freedoms or domains

Before the equality concept can be applied in practice, a list of the critical areas of life in terms of which the position of individuals and groups will be evaluated needs to be agreed. To arrive at a list of central and valuable freedoms and opportunities was a two-stage process. First, the international human rights framework was used to draw up a core list of what those central and valuable freedoms might be. Second, this list was supplemented and refined through a process of deliberative consultation - a program of workshops and interviews with the general public and with individuals and groups at high risk of discrimination and disadvantage.

This process resulted in the development of a detailed list of central and valuable freedoms grouped under ten headings or domains. These are:

- life
- physical security
- health
- education
- standard of living
- productive and valued activities
- individual, family and social life
- participation and voice
- identity, expression and self-respect
- legal security.

Other, more specific, freedoms are listed under each heading. A complete list of central and valuable freedoms with sub-headings for adults can be found on the website listed at the end of this article.

Building blocks of the equality measurement framework

The concept of equality is operationalised by examining three aspects of inequality in relation to central and valuable freedoms in 10 key domains. These form the following core 'building-blocks' of the Equality Measurement Framework:

- *Inequality by equality characteristics*: Age, disability, ethnicity, gender, transgender, religion or belief, sexual orientation, social class ...

- *Inequality of substantive freedom*: Inequality in the central and valuable things that people can be and do. There are three aspects: outcomes; process (unequal treatment, discrimination, lack of dignity and respect) and autonomy (choice and control).
- *Inequality in 10 domains*: Life; physical security; health; education; productive and valued activities; participation, influence and voice; individual, family and social life; identity, expression and self respect; legal security.

The third building block shows how the EMF reflects the mandate of the Equality and Human Rights Commission as set out in the Equality Act 2006. Inequality will be disaggregated *at least* by age, disability, gender, transgender, ethnicity, religion and belief, and sexual orientation. Additional characteristics such as social class, family type, asylum and refugee status can also be used in the framework, and interactions between these characteristics will also be important.

The ‘substantive freedom matrix’

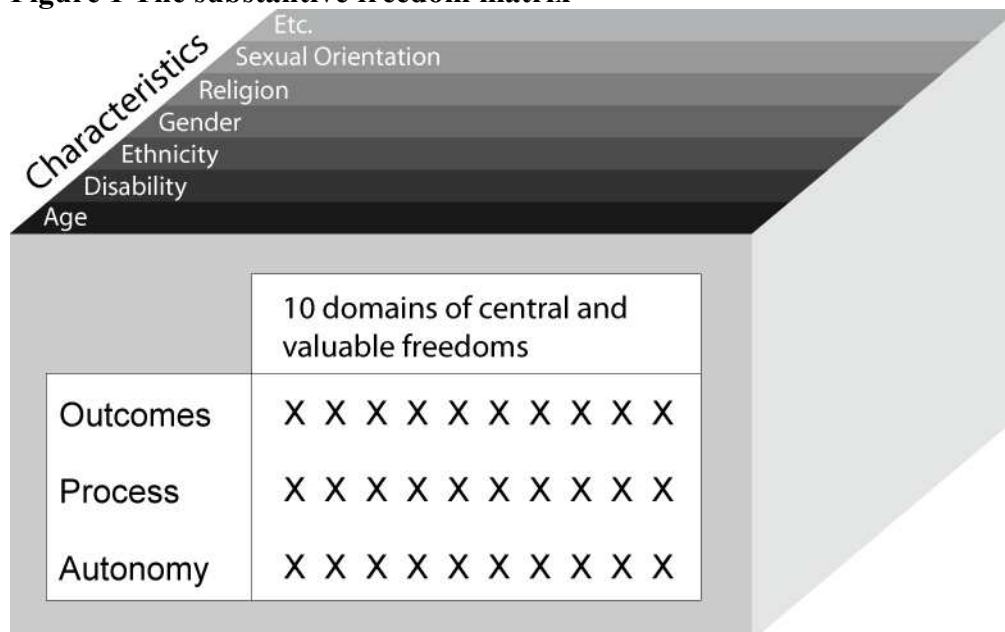
The EMF provides the foundation for developing a practical monitoring tool - a ‘substantive freedom matrix’ - that will allow us to evaluate and compare inequality between individuals and groups.

This will be a 3D matrix where the rows represent the three aspects of inequality discussed above – of outcomes, autonomy and process - and the columns represent the 10 domains of central and valuable freedoms. The layers of the matrix then represent the different characteristics of the groups of particular concern such as gender, ethnicity etc (Figure 1). Combinations of characteristics can also be used to identify intersectional group concerns i.e. those that cut across different characteristics.

For example, the EMF could be used to evaluate the health position of older people in terms of their:

- outcomes or health status;
- autonomy, questioning if they experience choice and control in relation to their medical treatment, including issues of information and consent, and
- process, exploring whether older people experience explicit discrimination or other forms of unequal treatment, such as a lack of dignity and respect.

Figure 1 The substantive freedom matrix



Using the EMF for analysis and evaluation

Not only can the EMF be used as a tool to measure inequality but the overall framework can assess policy interventions and underlying causes of inequality. The freedoms that an individual or a group enjoys are enhanced or constrained by, for example, their access to resources (their entitlements, in Sen's terminology) and how well those resources can be used due to social and individual factors (conversion factors).

At the same time, there are underlying processes that affect the available resources and how they are utilised. These include characteristics such as social class, ethnicity or age; the level of available resources and their distribution; and the way in which society and its institutions operate, ranging from the labour market to the built environment to the legal system.

For example, everyone in Britain has formal access to the health service. But if a person does not speak English, this can limit his or her access and consequently the chance of keeping healthy – one of the central and valuable things that the person could do. Intervention can alter a person's entitlement (e.g. by providing a translator) or, in the longer term, his or her conversion factors (e.g. by providing English lessons). This is controversial of course – a policy choice – but the framework helps to identify the kinds of intervention that might be relevant, and how they relate to end objectives.

Next steps

If the whole of the EMF were to be populated with data, it would be vast in scope. For it to be manageable and realise its potential as a tool for measuring equality, a system of spotlight indicators is being developed, involving a programme of consultation with subject specialists and stakeholders. Key indicators will be identified and agreed relating to outcomes, autonomy and process in each of the 10 domains of central and valuable freedoms. These indicators and accompanying data will be used to inform the EHRC's first triennial report in 2010, and by the Government Equalities Office to inform their priorities for policy interventions.

References

For background papers and more information, visit the website of the Programme for Research on Equality, Capability and Human Rights at http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/case/_new/research/equality/

The Equality and Human Rights Commission: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/Pages/default.aspx>

The Government Equalities Office is also involved in developing and using the EMF <http://www.equalities.gov.uk/>