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## UNIT 8 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

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## **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Empowerment is not a new concept. Every society has local terms for autonomy, self-direction, self-confidence, self-worth. What is new is the attempt to measure empowerment in a systematic way.

The Voices of the Poor study conducted in 60 countries showed that noiselessness and powerlessness are pervasive among the poor, affecting every aspect of their lives. Trapped in poverty and barred from opportunity, poor people live with little expectation that tomorrow will bring anything good, despite their arduous work. In recognition of these realities, the World Bank has identified a two-pronged strategy to reduce poverty on a large scale. The strategy focuses on improving the overall investment climate in developing countries and on empowering poor people by investing in their assets.

An empowering approach to poverty reduction is grounded in the conviction that poor people themselves are invaluable partners for development, since they are the most motivated to move out of poverty. Nobody has more at stake in reducing poverty than poor people themselves. A growing body of evidence points to linkages between empowerment and development effectiveness at both the society-wide level and the grassroots level (Narayan 2002). Empowerment approaches can strengthen good governance, which in turn enhances growth

prospects. When citizens are engaged, exercise voice, and demand accountability, government performance improves and corruption is harder to sustain. Citizen participation can also build consensus in support of difficult reforms needed to create a positive investment climate and induce growth. In addition, the empowerment agenda supports development effectiveness by promoting growth patterns that are pro-poor. This involves reducing inequalities by investing in poor people's capabilities through education and access to basic health care, as well as by increasing their access to land, financial capital, and markets.

Experience also demonstrates that empowerment can improve development effectiveness and pro-poor impact at the individual project level. Under certain conditions, grassroots community involvement is a powerful tool for the production, monitoring, and maintenance of local public goods such as water supply, sanitation, schools, health clinics, roads, and forests, which in turn increases the development effectiveness of investments. Empowerment strategies at the project level are supported by civil liberties in society. Evidence shows that projects in countries with strong civil liberties – particularly citizen voice, participation, and accountability-significantly outperform projects in countries with weak civil liberties.

However, despite this widespread interest in and support for empowerment, work has only recently begun on construction of an analytical framework on empowerment that can be used to guide state reform and action. The *World Bank's Empowerment and Poverty: A Sourcebook* provides an outline of such a framework (Narayan 2002). It views empowerment broadly as increasing poor people's freedom of choice and action to shape their own lives. It identifies four key elements that can change power relations between poor people and powerful actors: access to information, inclusion and participation, social accountability, and local organizational capacity. What is possible in a particular context depends on the nature of social and political

structures, on poor people's individual and collective assets and capabilities, and on the complex interaction between these factors.

Building on this framework, this Unit focuses on the challenge of evaluating empowerment and its contribution to development effectiveness. It represents a first attempt to launch a dialogue on empowerment and the measurement of empowerment across disciplines, including economics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and political science. This Unit presents an analytical framework for empowerment and few case studies are included in the block 3 based on the framework discussed in this Unit. It goes on to briefly discuss key challenges in the effort to measure empowerment.

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## **8.2 OBJECTIVES**

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After studying this Unit, you should be able to

- Define empowerment;
- Discuss conceptual frameworks for measuring empowerment;
- Analyse the issues of measuring empowerment; and
- State the dimensions of empowerment.

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## **8.3 THE EMPOWERMENT FRAMEWORK**

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In order to measure and monitor empowerment, it is important to have a clear definition of the concept and to specify a framework that both links empowerment to improved development outcomes and identifies determinants of empowerment itself.

Empowerment refers broadly to the expansion of freedom of choice and action to shape one's life. It implies control over resources and decisions. For poor people, that freedom is severely curtailed by their powerlessness in relation to a range of institutions, both formal and informal.

Since powerlessness is embedded in a culture of unequal institutional relations, an institutional definition of empowerment has been adopted:

Empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives.

This definition can be applied to understand and track changes in the unequal relationships between poor people and the state, markets, or civil society, as well as gender inequalities, even within the household.

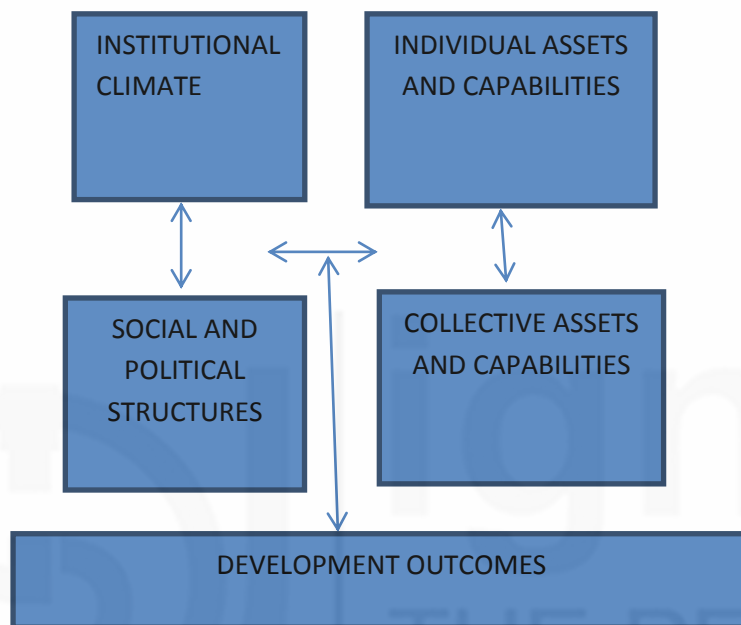
Moving from this broad definition, with its emphasis on institutions and interaction between poor people and more powerful actors, figure 8.1 outlines a conceptual framework that is helpful in understanding the key factors that facilitate or constrain poor people's efforts to improve their own well-being and also affect broader development outcomes.

The conceptual framework contains four building blocks:

- Institutional climate
- Social and political structures
- Poor people's individual assets and capabilities
- Poor people's collective assets and capabilities

The concepts of opportunity structure and agency developed by Patti Petesch, Catalina Smulovitz, and Michael Walton are superimposed on these four building blocks. The first two

**Figure 8.1 Overview of the Conceptual Framework**



building blocks constitute the opportunity structure that poor people face, while the second two make up the capacity for agency of poor people themselves. The opportunity structure of a society is defined by the broader institutional, social, and political context of formal and informal rules and norms within which actors pursue their interests. Agency is defined by the capacity of actors to take purposeful action, a function of both individual and collective assets and capabilities. All four components influence each other, and together they have effects on development outcomes. Empowerment of poor, excluded, or subordinate groups is a product of the interaction between the agency of these individuals and groups and the opportunity structure in which this agency is potentially exercised.

Four aspects of this conceptual framework are worth highlighting. First, empowerment is fundamentally a relational concept, emerging out of the interaction between poor people and their environment. This takes place through the rights, rules, resources, and incentives as well as the norms, behaviours, and processes governing the interactions between poor people and more powerful actors. The relationship plays out at multiple levels, from the global down to the state, community, and household levels, and in different arenas (state, civil society, and market).

Second, poor people's assets and capabilities are usually conceptualized as individual attributes. However, poor people's collective capabilities and organizations are often critical in helping them break through constraints of powerlessness and voicelessness.

Third, empowerment of poor people on a large scale requires both top-down changes in institutions and organizational processes and bottom-up changes in poor people's organizations and networks and in their individual assets.

Fourth, the intervention or entry points vary depending on the nature of the constraints and barriers, on what is feasible, and on the development outcomes desired. The appropriate intervention points will also change over time.

To extend our understanding of this conceptual framework, it is helpful to examine the building blocks in greater detail. Figure 8.2 shows the individual elements that make up each of the building blocks, as well as aspect of the interaction between them.

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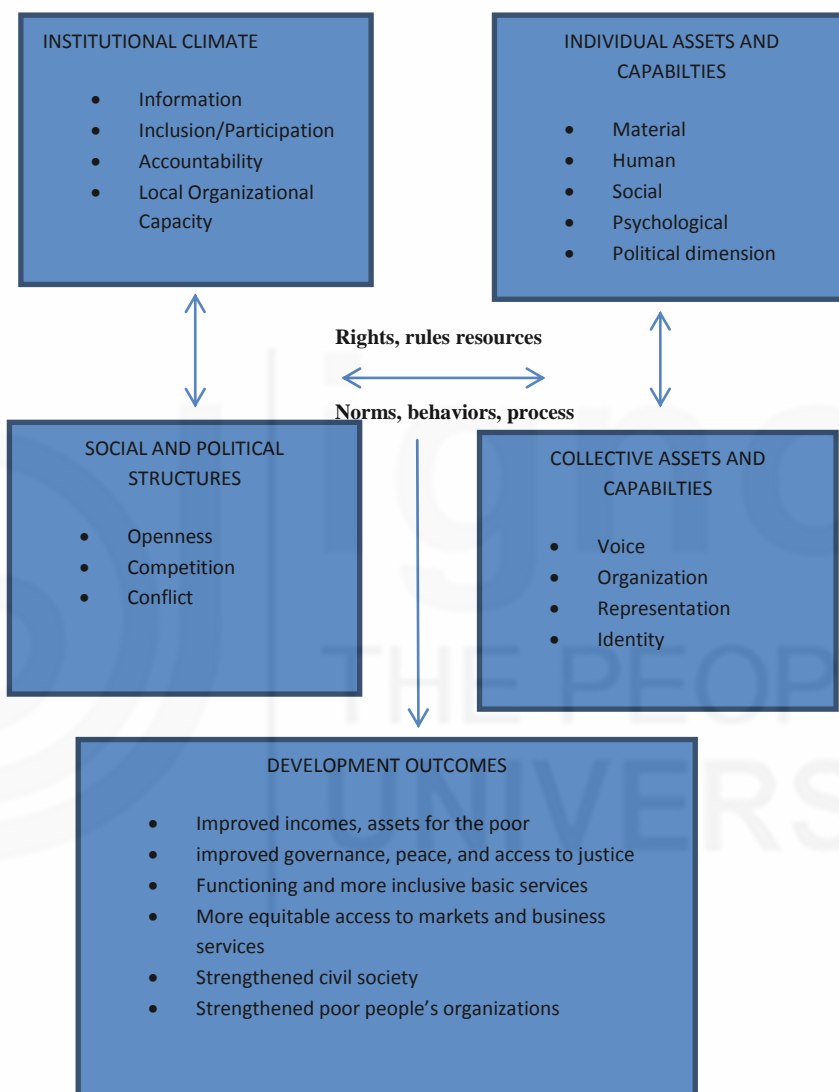
#### **8.4 THE OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE**

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Investment in poor people's assets and capabilities on a large scale requires changes in the opportunity structure within which poor people pursue their interests. This involves the removal of formal and informal institutional barriers that prevent the poor from taking effective action to

improve their well-being- individually or collectively-and that limit their choices. It also implies the need for changes in social and political structures that perpetuate unequal power relations.

**Figure 8.2 Detailed Overview of the Conceptual Framework**



## **8.5 INSTITUTIONAL CLIMATE**

The institutional climate creates incentives for action or inaction. Key formal institutions include the laws, rules, regulations, and implementation processes upheld by states, markets, civil society, and international agencies. Informal institutions include norms of social solidarity,



superiority, social exclusion, helplessness, and corruption that can subvert formal rules. Because the rules, regulations, processes, and actions of states are so important in creating the conditions in which poor people and other actors make decisions, empowerment efforts often focus on changing the unequal power relationship between the state and poor people. The same analysis can be applied to the relationships between poor people and private businesses or civil society organizations. In reality, the impetus for changes in state regulations often emerges because of on-the-ground experiences of civil society or the private sector.

Since social, cultural, political, and economic conditions vary and institutions are context-specific, strategies for institutional change must vary as well. Although there is no single institutional model for empowerment of poor people, experience shows that four key elements are almost always present when such efforts are successful. These elements act in synergy and strengthen the demand side of governance. The four elements of empowerment that must underlie institutional reform are access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability, and local organizational capacity.

### **8.5.1 Access to information**

Information is power. Two-way information flows from government to citizens and from citizens to government are critical for responsible citizenship and responsive and accountable governance. Informed citizens are better equipped to take advantage of opportunities, access services, exercise their rights, negotiate effectively, and hold state and non-state actors accountable. Critical areas include information about rules and rights to basic government services, about state and private sector performance, and about financial services, markets, and

prices. Information and communication technologies often play a pivotal role in broadening access to information.

### **8.5.2 Inclusion and Participation**

An empowering approach to participation treats poor people as co-producers, with authority and control over decisions and resources devolved to the lowest appropriate level. Inclusion of poor people and other traditionally excluded groups in priority setting and decision making is critical to ensure that use of limited public resources reflects local knowledge and priorities, and to build commitment to change. However, in order to sustain inclusion and informed participation, it is usually necessary to change rules, rights, and processes to create space for people to debate issues, participate in local and national priority setting and budget formation, and access basic and financial services. Customizing financial products such as loans and insurance and modifying distribution and purchasing networks are actions that can enable poor people to participate in markets on less exploitative terms.

### **8.5.3 Accountability**

State officials, public employees, private providers, employers, and politicians must be held to account, making them answerable for their policies and actions that affect the well-being of citizens. There are three main types of accountability mechanisms. Political accountability of political parties and representatives takes place increasingly through elections. Administrative accountability of government agencies is enforced through internal accountability mechanisms, both horizontal and vertical, within and between agencies. Social or public accountability mechanisms hold agencies accountable to citizens and can reinforced both political and administrative accountability.

### 8.5.4 Local organizational Capacity

This refers to the ability of people to work together, organize themselves, and mobilize resources to solve problems of common interest. Organized communities are more likely to have their voices heard and their demands met than communities with little organization. When membership-based groups federate at higher levels, they can gain voice and representation in policy dialogues and decisions that affect their well-being. Government rules, producers, and resources that support civil liberties—for example, by guaranteeing the right to form independent association and unions—provide an institutional climate in which such organizations can flourish.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

**Note:** i. Use this space given below to answer the question.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit

1. What are the four elements in the institutions which have to be addressed to bring empowerment?

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### **8.6 SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES**

Since societies are always stratified to a greater or lesser degree, empowerment outcomes are also mediated by the nature of social and political structures—the extent to which they are open or closed, inclusive or exclusionary, cooperative or conflictual. When social structures and social cleavages are deep and systemic, opportunities and access to services are determined less by individual characteristics than by a culture of inequality that discriminates against and excludes entire social groups (Tilly 1999). The more powerful groups control the entry and exit options of the less powerful and prevent or limit their participation and voice in economic, political, and

social life, often along ethnic lines, while those who “belong” benefit, the unequal access to power based on ethnicity can generate conflict (Bates 1999; Varshney 2003a; Weiner 2001).

Over time, however, change may occur, partly as a result of feedback loops. For example, when poor people organize themselves and demand information about the disappearance of government funds meant to assist them, the process not only changes them but also can help to reform the government. The government may pass a freedom of information act, making access to information a right. This success empowers the group further and encourages other citizen groups to organize. As poor people increasingly demand information, governments gradually improve access to information through Internet kiosks, public information booths, and so on. Over time, the behavior of government officials changes from resisting public demands for information to expecting to inform the public. As norms in this sphere slowly change, they feed back into social structures and relations between the more powerful and less powerful, spilling over into other domains.

Political scientists emphasize the importance of politics, political regimes, political competition, and the strength of civil society. At the broadest level, democracies by definition are about inclusions, civil liberties, free flows of information, accountable governments, and political competition. Democracies are better at managing conflict (Rodrik 200). However, democracies are far from perfect, and their functioning reflects existing social structures. Thus the functioning of democracies may be distorted by pervasive patron-client relations, by purchase of votes, and by purchase of influence by big business. At the national and local levels, regulations regarding political competition and the extent of public information available to citizens affect the responsiveness of political actors and the ability of voters, including poor people, to make informed electoral choices. Within democracies, the rule of law and accessible and functioning

enforcement mechanisms are critical in generating optimism about the future, creating a positive investment climate, and managing conflict (Keefer and Knack 1995; Rigobon and Rodrik 2004; Besley and Burgess 2002).

The importance of conflict resolution mechanisms for peace and economic prosperity has been underestimated. Democracies generally are better able to manage conflict (UNDP 2002b). Of the 47 most heavily indebted poor countries, nearly half are conflict-affected. Conflict can take place between nation-states, areas within a country, communities, social groups, or house holds, and even between members of a household, as evidenced by widespread domestic violence.

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## **8.7 POOR PEOPLE’S AGENCY**

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Poor women and men have limited ability to act to further their own interests. This “inequality of agency” plays a central role in perpetuating inequality and poverty (Rao and Walton 2004). Embedded in a culture of inequality, poor people need a range of assets and capabilities to influence, negotiate, control, and hold accountable other actors in order to increase their own well-being. These assets and capabilities can be individual or collective. Because poverty is multidimensional, so are these assets and capabilities.

### **8.7.1 Individual assets and capabilities**

“Assets” refers to material assets, both physical and financial. Such assets-including land, housing, livestock, savings, and jewelry-enable people to withstand shocks and expand their horizon of choices. The extreme limitation of poor people’s physical and financial assets severely constrains their capacity to negotiate fair deals for themselves and increases their vulnerability.

Capabilities are inherent in individuals and enable them to use their assets in different ways to increase their well-being. Human capabilities include good health, education, and productive or other life-enhancing skills. Social capabilities include social belonging, leadership, relations of trust, a sense of identity, values that give meaning to life, and the capacity to organize. Psychological capabilities include self-esteem, self-confidence, and an ability to imagine and aspire to a better future. The psychological aspect has been generally overlooked and is discussed in the next section. Political capabilities include the capacity to represent oneself or others, access information, form associations, and participate in the political life of a community or country.

### **8.7.2 Collective assets and Capabilities**

The importance of poor people's collective organizations in poverty reduction is only gradually being recognized. Given their lack of voice and power, and given the deeply entrenched social barriers that exist even in many formal democracies, poor people are often unable to take advantage of opportunities to effectively utilize or expand their assets or to exercise their individual rights.

To overcome problems of marginalization in society, poor people critically depend on their collective capability to organize and mobilize so as to be recognized on their own terms, to be represented, and to make their voices heard. These aspects of voice, representation, collective identity, solidarity, and terms of recognition help overcome the deep external social and psychological barriers that are usually internalized by poor people. Women, who are abused, for example, often justify as appropriate violence against them by domestic partners. It is usually

when they join women's solidarity groups that they begin to question whether the violence against them is justified.

Social capital, the norms and networks that enable collective action, allows poor people to increase their access to resources and economic opportunities. Poor people are often high in "bonding" social capital-close ties and high levels of trust with others like themselves. Given limited resources, these ties help them cope with their poverty (Narayan 1999; Woolcock and Narayan 2000; Grootaert and Van Bastelaer 2002). There are important gender differences in social capital (Narayan and Shah 2000).

Bonding social capital is not enough, however; it must be accompanied by "bridging" social capital in order to generate social movements that can bring about structural change. This can happen when small groups of poor people federate, gaining strength in numbers, or when their leaders take advantage of political opportunities to form alliances with powerful actors (Tarrow 1994). When poor people's groups establish ties with other groups unlike themselves, bridging social capital enables them to access new resources managed by other groups. Bridging can be established with organizations of the state, civil society, or the private sector.

Working through representative organizations that have legitimacy, poor people can express their preferences, exercise voice, and hold governments and state service providers accountable for providing quality services in education, health, water, sanitation, agriculture, and other areas. Collective action through poor people's membership-based organizations can also improve access to business development and financial services and to new markets where people can buy needed items and sell their produce. As previously excluded groups organize, this organizing may serve to change political structures through the creation of new political parties whose

presence and interests are felt at the national level, as has happened in Bolivia, Peru, and India. Leaders often engage in deeply symbolic behaviors that coalesce around issues of identity, often oppositional identity, to energize mass movements. Gandhi's peaceful salt march in defiance of the British, which mobilized an entire nation, is one powerful example.

There is a reciprocal relationship between individual assets and capabilities and the capability to act collectively. This two-way relationship holds true for all groups in society, although the focus here is on poor people. Poor people who are healthy, educated, and secure can contribute more effectively to collective action; at the same time, collective action can improve poor people's access to quality schools or health clinics.

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## **8.8 IMPROVING DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES**

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An empowering approach to state reform can be viewed as strengthening the demand side of governance. A demand-side approach focuses on creating laws, rules, and procedures that enable citizens and poor people's organizations to interact effectively with their governments. Such an approach invests in educating and informing citizens, in creating institutional mechanisms for their sustained inclusions and participation, and in enabling the emergence of strong poor people's organizations and other citizens' groups. The form that an empowering approach takes and the elements needed to support it vary by context and over time.

An empowering approach is not the most appropriate for achieving every development outcome. For example, certain macroeconomic functions such as regulation of the money flow would not benefit from this approach. An empowering approach is often useful in the following five areas:

- Provision of basic services
- Pro-poor market development



- Improved local governance
- Improved national governance
- Access to justice and legal aid

### **8.8.1 Provision of basic services**

This refers to improving poor people's access to and effective use of basic services, including health care, education, water, and roads. The World Bank supports government efforts to get resources down to the community level through a variety of institutional models. Implementation can be carried out through private or public actors; through central agencies, sectoral agencies, or decentralized authorities of local government; through stand-alone sector projects; or through multi sectoral community-driven development projects.

An empowering approach to the provision of basic services focuses on a variety of co-production strategies, the first concentrates on putting information about government performance in the public domain. The second makes use of mechanisms for inclusion and participation, including service delivery schemes that poor people can afford or demand-side financing strategies. The third focuses on promoting social accountability and local organizational capacity by giving community groups authority and control over key decisions and financial resources in community-driven development projects.

### **8.8.2 Pro-poor market development**

Poverty and vulnerability will not be reduced without broad-based economic growth fueled by markets that poor people can access at fair terms. Economic growth cannot be sustained if poor people are excluded from optimal engagement in productive activities. While an overall investment climate that fosters entrepreneurship, job creation, competition, and security of

property or benefit rights is important, it is not enough. Micro and small enterprises face constraints and exclusion that are not automatically corrected by improvements in the macro investment climate. Poor people are often excluded from equal access to economic opportunity because of regulations and because they lack information, connections, skills, credit, and organization. Elements of empowering approaches can help to overcome many of these barriers that prevent poor people's entry into markets or limit their returns. Changes in regulations can encourage private sector actors to innovate and develop new products that can potentially reach large numbers of poor people with financial and insurance products to manage their vulnerability. Because poor people are both producers and consumers, connecting small rural producers to markets can be profitable to private companies, as illustrated by the case of India's e-choupals (box 8.1).

**Box 8.1. A case Study : E-choupals**

In India, more than 2 million farmers are now connecting to markets through village-based computer stations called e-choupals. This experience shows how strategic changes in the institutional climate—that is, in the rules, resources, norms, behaviors, processes, and trust that govern the relationships between farmers and private companies—can quickly create incentives that lead to greater empowerment and increased incomes. These benefits can be achieved without changes in government rules and regulations, without direct intervention in longer-term processes of changing social and political structures, and without first increasing the collective and individual assets of poor people.

This innovation came from an Indian private sector company, ITC, which has annual revenues of \$2.6 billion and a large, diversified, and growing involvement in agribusiness trade. The e-

choupal scheme was developed by S. Shivakumar, CEO of ITC's agribusiness section, who was trained at IRMA, India's premier institute of management in rural development.

Choupal is the Hindi word for the village square, a place where elders meet. E-choupals use information technology to bring about virtual meetings between farmers, buyers, and suppliers. ITC installs each Internet access kiosk, powered by solar-charged batteries, in the house of a farmer who is trained to operate it. Local farmers use the computer to access information free of charge. After checking prices, they can choose to buy or sell through ITC or go to local markets instead. ITC pays the operator, known as a sanchalak, 5 rupees on each transaction completed, whether purchase of inputs or sale of produce. Efficiency improvements in buying and selling have led to increased revenues for farmers and for ITC.

At the heart of the e-choupal system's success is a social, cultural, and technical design that provides incentives for farmers to participate because it increases their profits. At the same time, it makes money for ITC; hence it is in their mutual interest to make the system work. Even when ITC's prices for inputs are higher, farmers sometimes choose them because of greater reliability.

Use of inputs such as improved seeds and fertilizers has gone up because ITC provides quality assurance. Moreover, the sanchalak, as a local resident and a farmer, knows the community.

With the operator's revenue depending on repeated transactions, there is a built-in incentive to satisfy the farmers and build trust. Operators take a public oath to serve all members of their communities without discrimination, and to spend part of their earnings on village welfare.

Farmers in India, as in many other parts of the world, are isolated from urban markets and dependent on middlemen, who monopolize information, sale of inputs, and crop purchasing. By providing easy access to information and hence transparency, e-choupals have helped to change

the relationship between farmers and their buyers and suppliers from one of exploitation and dependence to one of respect, trust, fairness, and equity. No attempt is made to directly address issues of caste, class, or untouchability, or to create formal farmers' groups. The computer becomes the aggregator of thousands of farmers. Nevertheless, the e-choupal system brings people together across social barriers for business, newspaper reading, or watching movies on farming techniques.

Within four years, the e-choupal network has spread to 30,000 villages and has 37 active partners, including companies, nongovernmental organizations, universities, and state governments. By 2004 ITC was adding 30 new villages a day. All this has been achieved without any change in government policy and or any attempt to create new farmers' organizations. Additional partnerships include one ITC has established with SEWA, the Self-employed Women's Association, a trade union of poor women in India's informal economy. In 2003, the initial year of that agreement, SEWA farmers sold 250 tonnes of sesame seed through ITC, at Rs. 29 per kilogram as compared to Rs. 18 per kilogram the previous year.

Source : Presentations by Mr. Shivakumar at the World Bank workshops in Bangalore in February 2004 and Shanghai in June 2004, and personal communication with Mr. R.Kidwai, CEO of the Grassroots Trading Network, in 2004.

### **8.8.3 Improved local governance**

Improved local governance is critical to better service delivery and greater responsiveness to poor people's priority problems. Decentralization and local government reform have so far focused primarily on the supply side of formal systems and not on strengthening the demand side

through actions that enable citizens to effectively use the space created by new rules and regulations. Empowered local governments (with authority and resources) need to empower local communities through mechanisms that increase citizen access to information, promote inclusion and participation, increase accountability of governments to citizens, and invest in local organizational capacity. In general, there has been insufficient attention to the relationship between citizens and local governments, and there are very few cases of investment in strengthening poor people's organizations or other local civil society intermediaries so they can effectively play the new roles assigned to them.

#### **8.8.4 Improved national governance**

Macroeconomic policy and choices are areas that are just beginning to open to societal engagement. Since national processes and policies determine poor people's access to resources and opportunities, it is critical that these processes incorporate the four empowerment elements. Actions that can be taken to keep national governments responsive and accountable include linking information from poor people to the process of national budget and policy formulation, as well as enabling civil society groups to become involved in expenditure tracking, citizen feedback, or social accountability mechanisms. This will require strengthening the capacity of poor people's organizations and other civil society groups to perform these new functions.

Participatory processes are increasingly being incorporated in some policy-based lending, in programmatic loans, and in the formation of national poverty reduction strategies. Mechanisms are now needed to institutionalize participatory strategies and increase their effectiveness by incorporating the other three elements of the empowerment framework-access to information, social accountability, and local organizational capacity.

### 8.8.5 Access to justice and legal aid

The rule of law and a functioning judicial system are important not only for the investment climate, but also for protecting poor people and their livelihoods. New thinking about making judicial and legal systems work for the poor is leading to greater use of modern and traditional mediation, conflict resolution, and enforcement mechanisms. These include (a) improving administrative justice and making administrative decisions accountable and affordable to ordinary citizens; (b) promoting judicial independence and accountability; (c) improving legal education; (d) expanding poor people's cultural, physical, and financial access to justice; and (e) strengthening public outreach and education.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

**Note:** i. Use this space given below to answer the question.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit

1. Which are the governance aspects have to be addressed to empower poor?

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### 8.9 ISSUES OF MEASURING EMPOWERMENT

One of the biggest challenges in measuring empowerment is that empowerment is a latent phenomenon. Its presence can only be deduced through its action or its results. Hence, most observed behaviors are proxies for the underlying phenomenon.

While empowerment of the poor and other excluded groups has become part of the development agenda, attempts to systematically monitor and evaluate programmes that use empowerment approaches for poverty reduction lag behind. This section highlights 10 challenges in measuring empowerment and assessing its contribution to improving development outcomes.

### **8.9.1 Intrinsic or Instrumental**

*If you wear a suit, you are treated as “Sir,” but if you are wearing sandals they send you away.-*

Poor men and women in Vila Junqueira, Brazil

Empowerment has intrinsic value. It is an end in itself. Feeling self-confident, walking with dignity, feeling respected, living without fear, is of value in itself. Empowerment is also important as a means of achieving specific development outcomes, ranging from improved attendance of teachers at schools to increased incomes for poor people. For the purposes of constructing a specific evaluation, therefore, it is important to specify whether empowerment is conceptualized as a means or an end or both.

For instance, participation in decision making can be viewed as a measure of empowerment. When such participation is seen as having intrinsic value, then the number of meetings held or attendance at meetings can be an appropriate measure. However, if participation is considered important because it leads to decision making that reflects the priorities of the poor, then participation is a means, and the evaluation framework has to compare the decisions made when poor people attended meetings with those made when they did not. In fact, research indicates that in some contexts, poor people’s attendance at meetings may be a poor indicator of their influence on decisions and hence outcomes. When attendance at village meetings is compulsory, as was true in Indonesia under Suharto, attendance is not a discriminating measure of influence.

### **8.9.2 Universal or Context-Specific**

*He scolded her and physically assaulted her for not preparing his meal. – A poor woman,*

Bangladesh

Empowerment as a value and phenomenon is clearly universal. People all over the world, including poor people, want to feel efficacious, to exert control over their lives, and to have some freedom of choice among options. While there can be a common conceptual framework across cultures, the context needs to be taken into account both at the analytical level (what matters) and in choice of measures (how it matters or manifests itself). The cultural context is important because culture consists of a relational system of norms, values, and beliefs on which there is simultaneously consensus and dissensus, and that are permeable and subject to change (Appadurai 2004).

The community and household, with all their heterogeneity, cleavages, and bonds, are important sites of cultural learning within which empowerment strategies are located. Yet few studies of empowerment have taken community cultural context into account. The theoretical assumption is that women's empowerment in the domestic sphere is mainly a property of social and cultural systems rather than of individual traits and preferences. In other words, the shared norms, values, and beliefs that characterize a group are key determinants. For instance, in certain communities the shared belief that men have more rights utility levels than do the traits of individual men and women, although there will still be some individual differences. In their survey, Mason and her colleagues do find that country and community of residence predict women's domestic empowerment better than their personal socioeconomic and demographic traits do. They also demonstrate that the primary variation across communities is explained by variation in community values and norms about gender roles.

The second way in which context needs to be taken into account is in the measures or indicators of empowerment. There may be some universal measures, such as freedom from domestic abuse. But many other measures will be culturally specific. In a Muslim society such as



Bangladesh, for instance, a women's movement beyond her home may be an indicator of increasing freedom, whereas in Jamaica, where women's movements are not culturally restricted, it has little relevance. Even when culture is taken into account, certain indicators may be ambiguous. The veil is perhaps the most controversial symbol, interpreted either as restricting and oppressing women or as providing them safety and freedom to move about without male harassment.

### **8.9.3 Individual or Collective**

*Only if we go together to the politicians, are we powerful. If we were to go alone, nothing would have happened. Our collective strength is our power.* – A poor woman, Tigri Slum, New Delhi, India

Most social science research on poverty is concerned with individuals, even though the concept of social groups and group identity has a long tradition in sociology. The unit of analysis in most poverty research is the individual. Yet we know from the vast literature on social exclusion that opportunities are not equally distributed but are stratified by social group. In attempting to measure the empowerment of those previously excluded, it is essential to locate individuals within the historical, social, and political context of their social groups in order to correctly interpret the impact of development interventions.

Unequal access is remarkably resistant to change, as evidenced by persistent and growing income inequality reflected in Gini coefficients. The Minorities at Risk data set estimates that almost 900 million people worldwide belong to groups that are discriminated against or disadvantaged because of their identity and face cultural, economic, or political exclusion (UNDP 2004). In Latin America, to cite just one example, the gap between indigenous and

mestizo populations on almost any development indicator-income, infant mortality, access to electricity, education-is deep and persistent (Glewwe and Hall 1998; Psacharopoulos and Patrinos 1994).

In this context of group-based poverty and exclusion, individual efforts at empowerment may be costly or futile. Responding to this reality, many poverty interventions focus on collective action through organizations of the poor, such as farmers', indigenous, women's self-help, credit, and water users' groups. Collective action, using processes and rituals that have cultural resonance, is often critical in building confidence and new identity. In poor villages in Andhra Pradesh, India, poor dalit women, as their first collective act, chose to walk through the high-caste areas of the village with their shoes on (rather than taking them off in deference) and with their heads held high. Their success in doing so without retribution from the high-caste villagers electrified the dalit women's movement, which then went on to address livelihood issues.

#### **8.9.4 Level of Application**

*There has never been anyone who represented us in any of the different governments. –A women, Thompson Pen, Jamaica*

The concept of empowerment and the conditions that enable empowerment of poor men and women can be considered at the individual household, group, community, local government, or national government level or, indeed, at the global level. The primary focus of empowerment strategies has been at the individual and community levels. However, for large-scale poverty reduction, the rules, regulations, organizations, norms, and values that operate at other levels become important and influence what is possible at the community level. India's 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional amendment, which requires that one-third of *panchayat leaders* be women, has led

to the election of a million women as heads of these local government bodies-and this in a cultural context where women not only lack many rights but also have lower survival rates, leading to a national demographic profile increasingly skewed in favor of men.

More than 120 countries worldwide have decentralized at least expenditures to local governments, with the expectation that bringing these functions closer to the affected citizens will generate greater accountability and responsiveness to local needs. In this context of decentralization, local government rules and regulations, including formulas for allocation of resources, have an impact on empowerment of poor people. So do local social and political structures, including norms of political competition and openness that govern public resource allocation within and between communities. All these are therefore important to measure (Bardhan 2004; Besley, Pande, and Rao 2004; Foster and Rosenzweig 2003).

The ethnic composition of a local government relative to the ethnicity of the local population can also influence local government investment decisions and performance (Grootaert and Narayan 2004; Schady 2000). A recent study in Pakistan documents how, since decentralization and elections at the union level, the distribution of public goods reflects biases in favour of the villages of elected union leaders and those who belong to a *dhara* (faction of influential villagers) (Cheema and Mohmand 2004).

Although district-level analyses are relatively rare, a recent study in Indonesia shows the tremendous variation in frequency of conflict across districts. It found that 15 districts, inhabited by only 6.5 percent of the country's population, accounted for 85 percent of all deaths in reported conflicts (Varshney, Panggabean, and Tadjoeuddin 2004). The statistic, showing that violent

conflict is largely limited to certain areas within the country, has important implications for policy.

At the countrywide level, state and national policies that enable or hinder the sharing of control and authority with local people are critical. Uphoff (1996) explains how farmer involvement in a large, broken-down irrigation system in Sri Lanka led not only to the rehabilitation and more efficient functioning of the system but also to revisions of national policy. Today more than 500,000 farmers are members of participatory irrigation management systems throughout Sri Lanka.

Given the importance of state-society relations and the relative weakness of research linking local actions to the national political and social climate, it is important to consider indicators at the national level that govern state society interactions. These include measures of state efficacy, the nature of political regimes, and the strength of civil society.

While the emphasis varies from author to author, there is agreement that a sub set of governance indicators are important in enabling the empowerment of poor people and citizens. The nature of social capital, the extent of trust embedded in public institutions, and the nature of civil society are critical aspects of state-society relations. At the national level, the “national barometer” studies inspired by the World Values Survey provide indicators of trust and social capital that are representative at the national level. The Social Capital group at the World Bank has developed a social capital questionnaire that has been tested in several developing countries (Grootaert et al. 2004).

There is no globally agreed measure of the strength of civil society. Civil society is sometimes defined as the space in society where collective citizen action takes place (Knight, Chigudu, and

Tandon 2002). Others define it more broadly as the space between the household and the state (Varshney 2003a). The CIVICUS Civil Society Index is the first attempt to develop an index at the national level that can be compared across countries (see Carmen Malena and Volkhart Finn Heinrich).

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### **8.10 DIMENSIONS OF EMPOWERMENT: NEGLECT OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL**

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*Before I joined SEWA, I was treated like an animal-by my employer, by my husband, by my village. Now I am treated like a human.... I am not afraid anymore.* –A tobacco worker, Gujarat, India

Empowerment is not a unitary concept. It has many dimensions, and these dimensions do not necessarily move together at the same pace, or even in the same direction. Two studies can look at the same phenomenon yet come up with different conclusions depending on the dimensions of empowerment they measure.

To a large extent, the availability of data has dictated how empowerment is measured. The most commonly studied dimension of empowerment is the economic dimension. This includes objective indicators such as income and expenditure profiles, ownership of assets, and subjective measures of control and authority over decision making. The latter are closer to direct measures of empowerment, whereas the former may be enablers or outcomes, depending on the conceptual framework. The economic dimension can be studied at different level. For example, women's control over income can be studied within the household. At the community level, women's access to employment, common property, membership in trade association, and access to markets may be key. At the national level, women's representation in jobs, the inclusion of

women's economic interests in federal budgets, and laws guaranteeing equal pay for equal work may be important.

Less attention has been paid to the social and political dimensions of empowerment. Least studied of all is the psychological dimension. Nonetheless, the fact that individuals with similar abilities and resources exhibit different propensities to act on their own behalf has led to a growing interest among researchers in the psychological dimensions of empowerment. Self-confidence and a sense of self-efficacy are important precursors to action. The process of taking action and reaping the rewards further reinforces these feelings, creating virtuous cycles of reflection and action.

Albert Bandura (1995), a psychologist, has demonstrated experimentally that when beliefs about self-efficacy are manipulated independent of performance and external conditions, it affects future performance. Thus a person's internal sense of efficacy plays an independent causal role. Reviewing the psychological literature, Bandura (1998) concludes: "People's beliefs that they can produce desired effects by their actions influence the choices they make, their aspirations, level of effort and perseverance, resilience to adversity, and vulnerability to stress and depression.

Arjun Appadurai (2004) uses two phrases, "terms of recognition" and "capacity to aspire," to capture the collective aspects of psychological empowerment among impoverished groups. Both are characteristics embedded in social groups and determined by their collective cultural experience. Poor and excluded groups are defined by more powerful social groups and held in place by social norms and expectations of behavior, often reified in public debate and even interpretation of scriptures. Unless poor people fight to change their terms of recognition as a

group, opportunities will by pass them. Thus the Indian *dalit* women, walking together through the high-caste village, defied higher-caste norms of what is appropriate behaviour for the lowest caste and in so doing sought to change the terms of their recognition by the higher-caste group. Capacity to aspire is defined as the forward-looking capacity of individuals and groups to envision alternatives and to aspire to different and better futures. If a person cannot conceive of better times, he or she is unlikely to take action toward that end. Generating the capacity to envision a different future is therefore an important part of interventions and solidarity movements. Martha Nussbaum's (2000) term "adaptive preference" captures a similar phenomenon, one in which marginalized groups internalize low possibilities for themselves because of their life experiences.

Ed Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener argue that while certain external conditions are necessary for empowerment, they are not sufficient without internal feelings of competence, energy, and the desire to act. These authors focus on subjective well-being, which they define as people's positive evaluations of their lives, including pleasant emotions, fulfillment, and life satisfaction. Psychological empowerment, or belief in one's own efficacy, is one important aspect of subjective well-being. At the same time, subjective well-being-positive emotions such as joy, happiness, and love-heightens people's Diener and Biswas-Diener contend that the most important aspect of empowerment is not objective power but feelings of power, and that just because people have objective power does not mean that they will feel empowered or will act. Diener and Fujita (1995) found that self-confidence was the resource that most strongly predicted life satisfaction, more than material resources or social resources.

Joy Deshmukh-Ranadive looks at the psychological aspect with respect to empowerment of women, using the concept of mental space. Mental space, according to this author, is the sense

of freedom from restrictions and constraints; it refers to self-esteem or power within. Focusing on marginalized women in South and Southeast Asia, Deshmukh-Ranadive contends that collective action and information play important roles in expanding women's mental space. Without such expansion, they are unlikely to feel empowered, even when physical or economic conditions of their lives improve.

The extreme opposite of empowerment is fear. Fear freezes action; since time immemorial, it has been used by the powerful to subjugate and control the less powerful. Fear is probably the single most debilitating, disempowering, and dehumanizing experience. It keeps women trapped in homes that are physically or mentally abusive. It keeps landless laborers working for less than minimum wage and silent even when they have not been paid for months. In countries where access to even basic services is contingent on patronage, fear of violent retribution keep citizens and poor people quiet about corruption and prevents action against corrupt officials.

Caroline Moser argues that peace and security are part of empowerment because violence and crime result in fear, insecurity, and a decline in socioeconomic well-being. In Colombia, participants in a community led peace-building process highlighted the importance of psychological dimensions in measuring their own empowerment. In one project, participants focused on the term *convivencia*, which means to live together in harmony, with tolerance, respect for difference, and peaceful resolution of conflicts. In the second project, participants identified individual self-esteem as particularly important. Indicators included increased ability to speak in public, letting go of past trauma, overcoming the sense of being a victim, and recognizing one's own agency. The affirmation *spuedo* (yes I can) came up repeatedly in all groups.



Hence subjective and psychological well being-one's self-judgement as a happy, well functioning, competent, self-confident human being- is a critical asset that men and women across cultures, particularly poor men and women, must have to improve their lives. The behavioral manifestations of this sense of self-efficacy will of course vary across cultures, and may be situation or domain-specific. They will also be influenced by an iterative process in which the poor engage with their environment, accomplish tasks, are surprised at their success, gain more confidence, and take on expanding roles and challenges.

The relationships between income, power, and subjective well-being are complex, and the quantitative exploration of these relationships has intensified in recent years. One of the most common assumptions in development has been that if a woman earns an income, it empowers her. Studies have shown, however, that women may become income earners but still not increase their power in decision making, in social relations, or in freedom of movement.

There are ranges of qualitative and quantitative techniques for measuring psychological characteristics, mostly based on self-assessment. They include life stories, scales of subjective well-being batteries of psychometric tests, and event or mood sampling, as well as measurement of brain impulses, changes in body temperature, and so on.

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## **8.11 ORIGINS AND CHANGE**

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If a woman works hard and saves enough to buy a cow, she feels more competent and has more assets; she is empowered. If she inherits a cow or receives a gift of a cow because of her social relationships, she may be wealthier, but is she empowered? One group might say yes, but those who focus on agency and the importance of going through a learning process in bringing about change would say no. Malhotra and Schuler are strong proponents of the view that the origins of

empowerment are important and that the process of learning is the critical ingredient. That is, empowerment is said to have occurred if it results from the agency of the person who feels empowered.

However, it may also happen that a woman acquires a cow through her own hard work and still feels no different about herself; that is, she does not gain self-confidence or feel that she has more choice or freedom. Hence, the extent of change in empowerment remains an empirical issue.

Also implicit in the focus on process is progression; that is, empowerment entails change from a previous state to a new state of greater freedom or choice. This idea is captured in Naila Kabeer's (2001) definition of empowerment as "the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them". Indicators of disempowerment or empowerment will vary depending upon the specific context and time. For example, when all women acquire certain rights previously denied to them—such as freedom of movement or the right to open a bank account without a male signature—then these rights become norms and are no longer valid indicators of empowerment.

A third aspect of the process is that it is relative. Empowerment does not happen in a vacuum. A woman is empowered, or not, relative to her previous status and relative to others in her reference group. However, conditions that enable empowerment can be absolute or relative. Women's right to vote is an absolute measure: women either have this right or they do not. The institutional climate may make it easier or more difficult to vote. Whether women choose to exercise their right without coercion is an indicator of their empowerment in practice. Women's participation in electoral politics compared with men's is a relative concept. For an individual

woman, self-empowerment can never be an absolute concept because no person is ever totally empowered; empowerment is always defined in relation to prior status or to others in one's reference group.

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### **8.12 ESTABLISHING CAUSALITY**

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*When the village council calls a meeting, all the decisions about a project have already been made, that it should be this way and that way. The poor only remain silent and listen – Poor men, Indonesia*

Measuring empowerment is most useful if it is done in framework that defines the role of empowerment in achieving positive development outcomes and defines the pathways of causation, depending on the type of intervention and the constraint being addressed. Different disciplines have different research paradigms. Psychology and medical sciences have traditionally placed greater reliance on experimental designs with randomization, whereas economics, sociology, and demography have traditionally used large surveys to statistically manipulate data to establish causality. Anthropology has traditionally relied on ethnographies, life histories, and event and process tracing to establish causality in small samples. Participatory practitioners rely on a learning-by-doing approach to understand causality. These more subjective approaches can be supplemented by more objective external evaluations using any of the research designs mentioned above.

Establishing causality requires three steps: (1) specifying the conceptual framework, (2) specifying the sampling frame, and (3) specifying data collection methods and tools and analytical techniques.

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### **8.13 WHAT IS MEASURED: CLEAR CONCEPTS, LINKED MEASURES**

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What is measured has to be linked to a theoretical causal framework that specifies a limited set of clear concepts. Since empowerment is multidimensional, and many enabling factors such as the political regime are also multidimensional, one must start by specifying the relevant concepts. Measures must then be chosen that have a close link to these concepts and the pathway specified. Measures should be designed to capture variation in the measure. Munck discusses the challenges in developing appropriate measures for democratic governance, and Uphoff emphasizes the importance of linking the concepts of power resources and power results to a set of indicators.

Since empowerment is difficult to observe except in action, most measures are either proxies or factors that enable empowerment or its proximate determinants. Having a clearly specified causal framework helps in sorting out potential variables.

#### **8.13.1 Who Measures: Self or others**

*For some I am poor, for others not, but compared to my own former situation, I am a beggar. –  
A poor man, Armenia*

A fundamental principle of evaluation is objectivity and dispassion in measurement. To achieve objectivity, it is generally assumed that the subject should not be the person doing the measuring and that the measures themselves should be objective as far as possible. However, even so-called objective measures such as income or land holdings are not free from reporting bias. For example, land holdings may be self-reported, based on actual measurement of field sizes, or based on land records, all of which are subject to error.

Participatory research evolved out of the need to understand complex realities from the perspectives of the people whose behavior external agents were trying to change—farmers, labourers, mothers with young children, and so on. It emerged in part as a reaction to research methods that kept subjects at a distance by generating data through household surveys that were processed, managed, used, and publicized far away from those most affected. The information produced by these surveys often was not sufficiently nuanced to provide a good picture of local realities; thus, the studies did not lead to behavioral change. Two principles underlying the participatory research approach distinguish it from other types of research. First, it seeks to close the distance between the researcher and the respondent by making the respondent also the researcher. The respondents own and carry out the entire research process. Second, participatory research assumes that this process of active engagement will empower the respondents to take follow-up action. The data collection methods can be open-ended or closed-ended, qualitative or quantitative.

While there is a history of mistrust of self-assessment techniques, these measures are increasingly used in poverty assessments, for several reasons. Not all variance in incomes can be explained by objective conditions in the external environment. Researchers need to understand complex social and psychological realities and processes in order to correctly interpret behavior and explain why certain individuals take advantage of economic opportunities while others with the same demographic profile do not. Q-sort methodology, which uses factor analysis to sort individuals into groups based on shared attitudes, is one way of tapping into these underlying attributes of individuals and groups.

People's assessments of their own well-being tend to be only modestly correlated with their life circumstances as reflected in more objective welfare measures. Rather than dismissing self-

assessments as “faulty measures,” however, recent studies show that subjective measures may be more important than objective ones in predicting people’s probability of taking action. A major conclusion from these studies is that beyond a minimum threshold level, relative income matters more than absolute income (Graham and Pettinato 2002).

### **8.13.2 How to Measure: Quantitative or Qualitative**

There has been a fierce debate across disciplines on the value of different data collection methods. There overall conclusions have emerged. First, no one method is always superior; methods must be matched to the questions of interest and must be credible to the end users, often policy makers. Second, it is important to distinguish between methods and tools for data collection. Third, in most situations a mix of data collection tools provides a more reliable and complete picture of the phenomenon under study, as the tools balance out each other’s weaknesses.

For example, conflict and its impact on livelihoods can be studied in different ways. If national policy makers are mainly interested in the incidence of conflict across a country, a four-community study that describes conflict in those four communities in detail is unlikely to provide the answers they are looking for. If, however, they are interested in the roots of conflict, then they may find useful a four-community study in which the four communities are randomly selected after a stratification process to represent different types of conflicts or types of communities. A detailed ethnographic investigation using process tracing, complemented by household surveys to provide numbers on conflict incidence over the past 20 years, may yield answers that are of interest to policy makers.

Hentschel (1999) makes a distinction between quantitative data collection methods such as large representative surveys, and qualitative methods such as interviews or observation. But the data collected using any of these methods can be either qualitative or quantitative. Thus a large household survey can include subjective data or self-assessments of well-being, power or wealth, while an interview process can include open-ended questions or life histories as well as short questionnaires. The life histories can be analyzed qualitatively or they can be quantified after setting up coding categories. The coding can be done manually or facilitated by content analysis software (Narayan, Chambers, et al. 2000).

To take optimal advantage of different methods, Rao and Woolcock identify three different ways of integrating qualitative and quantitative methods: parallel, sequential, and iterative. When the research enterprise is large and complex and time is short-as in some national poverty assessments-survey research and in-depth case studies of communities may be done by different teams simultaneously. Integration takes place at the time of writing. Hence, qualitative data do not inform the design of the survey questionnaire, but they add richness when findings are integrated. A sequential approach often starts with in-depth qualitative work using a range of open ended methods that provide insight into a complex process and thus help to define the hypotheses of interest and appropriate quantitative questions. An iterative approach is similar but involves return visits to the field to successively understand anomalies in data or to probe new issues revealed by the data.

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#### **8.14 SUMMING UP**

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In this we have learnt the definition for empowerment. After defining the empowerment, the Unit introduces empowerment, which is developed by the author itself. The empowerment framework contains five blocks namely institutional climates, individual assets and capability, social and

political structure, collective capabilities and development outcome. Each block contains many elements which is discussed in detail with suitable examples. After explaining empowerment framework, the author discusses issues of measuring empowerment. This World Bank Framework addressed more on governance and the empowerment of entire community.

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## **8.15 GLOSSARY**

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**Governance:** “The traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised” – Kaufman et al

The way “... power is exercised through a country’s economic, political, and social institutions.” – the World Bank’s PRSP Handbook.

“The exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations, and mediate their differences.” – UNDP.

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## **8.16 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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### **Check Your Progress Exercise 1**

1. Information; Inclusion/Participation; Accountability; Local Organizational Capacity

### **Check Your Progress Exercise 2**

2. Provision of basic services; Pro-poor market development; Improved local governance; Improved national governance; Access to justice and legal aid

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## **8.17 REFERENCES**

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### **Notes**



1. Epigraphs in this chapter are drawn from the World Bank's Voices of the Poor study, from field notes by Soumya Kapoor for the World Bank pilot study on Moving Out of Poverty, and from a group meeting attended by Deepa Narayan in Anand, Gujarat, India
2. The *Voices of the Poor* series includes three volumes: *Can Anyone Hear Us?* (Narayan, Patel, et al. 2000); *Crying Out for Change* (Narayan, Chambers, et al. 2000); and *From Many Lands* (Narayan and Petesch 2002).
3. This strategy draws on *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty*, which highlights three concepts: opportunity, empowerment, and security (World Bank 2000).
4. Isham, Kaufmann, and Pritchett (1997) studied the rates of return on World Bank projects across developing countries and found that each 1-point improvement in the Gastil scale measuring civil liberties increased the project rate of return by more than 1 percent. Isham, Narayan, and Pritchett (1995), in a study of 121 rural water supply projects, found that participation by the intended beneficiaries improved project performance.
5. For a more detailed discussion see the empowerment sourcebook (Narayan 2002, chap. 2).
6. The "opportunity structure and agency framework" developed by these authors was presented at the World Bank workshop on measuring empowerment in February 2003 and refined over the next year. It is discussed in detail in chapter 2 of this volume. Several efforts are under way to apply the framework to the evaluation of development programs (Alsop and Heinsohn 2005).

7. Sen (1985, 1999) has been the earliest and clearest proponent of the notion of poor people's agency, arguing that poor people often lack the capability to articulate and pursue their interests fully as they are "unfree".
8. For a detailed review of evidence and program experience that led to the selection of these four empowerment elements, see the empowerment sourcebook (Narayan 2002).
9. This in fact has happened in India. The Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), an organization created by poor farmers and workers in the state of Rajasthan, started by fighting for workers' rights and transparency of information on government programs meant to help poor people. Based on this work, MKSS advocated a freedom of information law to promote transparency more widely in state institutions. In 2000 the Rajasthan State legislature passed the Right to Information Act, and a similar bill was introduced in the Indian Parliament in 2004. Freedom of information laws now exist in more than 50 countries (SEE <http://www.freedominfo.org>).
10. Section 5 of this book focuses on issues of democracy and how they function. It includes important reviews by Ashutosh Varshney, Larry Diamond, and Stephen Knack.
11. For a good review of democracy and poverty reduction, see Przeworski et al. (2000). On capture of the state in many former Soviet Union countries, see Jones, Hellman, and Kaufmann (2000). On the functioning of democracy in Latin America, see UNDP (2002a).
12. See Collier et al. (2003) for a history and analysis of civil conflict; Bates (1999) and Varshney (2003b) on ethnic conflict; and Barron, Kaiser, and Pradhan (2004) on conflict at the community level.

13. The term “oppositional identity” is used by Akerlof and Kranton (2000). They argue that a person’s sense of self, or identity, should be incorporated in economic model because it affects individual interactions and outcomes. Excluded groups that can never full integrate with dominant groups often adopt oppositional identities.
14. Differential access and the difficulties faced by the poor in accessing basic services are the subject of *World Development Report 2004* (World Bank 2003). The authors highlight the importance of accountability and voice. For an analysis of how basic services fail the poor, concentrating on problems of incomplete information, insincere political promises, and social polarization, see Keefer and Khemani (2004).
15. Prahalad (2004) presents case studies from across the developing world in which companies are successfully providing products and services that improve the living conditions of the poorest of the poor.
16. The Open Society Justice Initiative (<http://www.justiceinitiative.org/>) promotes and tracks legal reform activities around the world that are grounded in the protection of human rights.
17. For a useful overview and case studies of applications by nongovernmental organizations, see Oakley 2001).
18. See Alsop, Krishna, and Sjoblom (2001). In contrast, a more recent study by Besley, Pande, and Rao (2004) across 522 villages in India found that people from socially and economically disadvantaged groups were more likely to attend *gram sabha meetings* (called by local government) and to be chosen as beneficiaries in villages that held such meetings.

19. For an analysis of the role of culture in poverty and inequality, see Rao and Walton (2004).
20. *Dalits*, or untouchables, face many forms of exclusion, including the social norm that they must walk barefoot through the streets of higher-caste area.
21. See chapter 6 of this volume by Diener and Biswas-Diener.
22. In cases of adaptive preference, individuals in deprived circumstances are forced to develop preferences that reflect their restricted options. A woman's perception of her self and her world may be so skewed by her circumstances and cultural upbringing that she may say and believe that she genuinely prefers certain things that she would not prefer if she were aware of other possibilities.
23. Ed Diener has been engaged in research on happiness and its determinants throughout his career. After examining data on happiness and income across countries and across time, Diener has concluded that there is no strong relationship between happiness and income above a certain income threshold.
24. The Poverty Action Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (<http://www.povertyactionlab.org/>) has launched several evaluation and research projects based on random assignment of intervention to treatment and control groups. See also Duflo and Kremer (2003).
25. For an account of the evolution of a successful participatory development experience in irrigation management, see Uphoff (1996)

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## **8.18 QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND PRACTICE**

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1. Explain the empowerment framework developed by The World Bank and what are the building blocks in the empowerment framework?

2. Explain the issues of measuring empowerment.









































