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**Coping in Crisis: Flooding in Bangladesh****Joe Devine**

Rivers in Bangladesh shape the physiography of the country as well as the life of its people. Because Bangladesh is situated on the delta of two of the biggest rivers in the world and the vast proportion of its landmass is less than 10 metres above sea level, floods frequently occur. Normally the monsoon rains herald the start of the 'flood season'. When this coincides, as it did in July 2004, with accelerated snow and ice melts from the Himalayas, the ecological effects can be devastating.

The 2004 floods inundated 40 % of the total area of Bangladesh, affected one quarter of the entire population and were directly responsible for the death of approximately 800 people. The floods inundated two of the rural sites where WeD was carrying out research, and as a result research activities were suspended for almost two months. However in one rural site, researchers managed to administer RANQ (Resources and Needs Questionnaire) to 26 households before the floods. This offered a unique opportunity to return after the flood and follow up on the same households. To do this, two different methods were used.

First, RANQ was re-administered to the same households after the floods had receded. This helps us capture the immediate impact of a crisis like floods on a household's structure; its access to and use of material, social and cultural resources; and people's overall assessment of their own life satisfaction. Second, we developed a form of diary that asks questions about household expenditure, income sources and the use of loans. Within the WeD methodological framework, the diary is an example of process-driven research that seeks to understand the complex adjustments households make and the resources they deploy to achieve wellbeing outcomes. The diary is self-administered and will be kept for one year. Researchers visit the 40 households who agreed to complete the diary regularly in order to discuss diary entries.

At the height of the flood, most of the houses in the affected site were completely submerged forcing villagers to

move. Some were fortunate to find shelter with relatives in other villages. Many however simply built makeshift tents on the main road and waited till the flood-water disappeared. The most immediate impact of the flood for the majority of the villagers were major crop losses (not only standing rice but also that to be transplanted), asset loss (many household items were destroyed) and unemployment (which particularly affected wage labourers).



The decrease in incomes coupled with very restricted alternative employment opportunities led the WeD team to use the diary to focus on issues of income, expenditure and loans. Although data is still being collected, two initial findings have emerged strongly. First, all households have turned to relatives, friends and different social networks as part of their coping strategies. For poorer households, friends and relatives within the village were of greatest importance. But richer households have engaged more with contacts outside the village such as political leaders and businessmen. Poorer households therefore face a double burden. On the one hand their options to secure income are more restricted but more necessary. On the



other hand, their existing networks of support are less able to provide access to key resources.

The most important coping strategy for the majority of households has been borrowing money. For poorer house-

holds, this helps meet everyday consumption needs. For richer households, loans have been used to support business initiatives. However with evidence that interest rates on loans increased substantially, the reliance on borrowing as a coping strategy will have significant

implications for people's wellbeing over the medium and longer terms. The diaries will help us understand how this dynamic unfolds and how it affects different people in very different ways.

Joe Devine is the Country Coordinator for WeD Bangladesh.

Exploring wellbeing in Thailand: initial findings from Quality of Life (QoL) and Resources and Needs Questionnaire (RANQ)

Darunee Jongudomkarn, Laura Camfield, Mònica Guillén Royo and Jackeline Velazco

What is wellbeing and how can we measure it? WeD is beginning to answer these questions as it starts analysis of field data. Using 'wellbeing' as an umbrella term allows WeD to go beyond traditional notions of poverty to embrace human needs, subjective wellbeing, resource profiles and livelihood activities. To achieve this, we are using a suite of data collection methods and two are presented here.

Analysis of the initial phase of research on **Quality of Life** by **Darunee Jongudomkarn** and **Laura Camfield** reveals the many dimensions of people's subjective wellbeing in rural and urban Thailand. Data from focus groups, semi-structured interviews, the Person Generated Index (an individual QoL measure, Ruta 1998), and researchers' field notes were analysed to reveal 26 areas of QoL.

Most frequently mentioned was **Family Relationships**. These included following social norms and codes of conduct, engaging in reciprocal relationships of caring and support, and being able to meet the family's needs. But this was often a source of stress and conflict, for example where wives felt husbands neglected their families in favour of alcohol (North East Thailand) or religious observance (Southern Muslims), or parents felt their children weren't showing them due gratitude ('katanyu') by sending them remittances.

The second most frequently mentioned area was **Money**, which impacted on wellbeing through

enabling rest and leisure as well as meeting material needs. Why money was needed differed across age groups: young people wanted to be able to afford status goods; middle-aged people to be able to fulfil their family responsibilities and old people to be able to stop working.

Occupations (and those of their children) were the third most frequently mentioned area. These were seen as a source of money, status and stress. Owning a **House** was mentioned by all, although only people in peri-urban areas were concerned about its appearance and size. People were also concerned about their **Health**, largely due to the inconvenience and cost of illness, but also because of psychological impact of stress caused by family problems and the threat of debt.

Food was primarily discussed in terms of celebration – only the elderly remembered times of food insecurity. Land was a source of pride where it was owned but stress where insecurity of land-holding was common. Another common goal was the acquisition of **material or 'convenience goods'**; mobile phones were ubiquitous in peri-urban areas and those who had motorbikes aspired to own pick-up trucks. These goods were regarded as symbols both of wealth and happiness: 'we know how happy a man is by counting his material goods' said an elderly female respondent. Although people emphasised the importance of restraint and financial planning, few seemed to subscribe to it and rising levels of debt were much in evidence.

Another part of the research asked what were the characteristics of an 'ideal person' and an 'ideal village'. In response to the former, **religious** and **ethical beliefs and practices** were frequently mentioned, focusing on personal characteristics and behaviour towards others. Similarly, while good infrastructure and environment were part of the 'ideal village', good relationships between villagers, good leadership, religious observance and morality, safety and security were equally important. Education was usually only mentioned as training to improve skills and not considered intrinsically important.

Jonathan Dimbleby chairs Eradicating poverty: manifesto

WeD organised a public debate on this topic with radio broadcaster Jonathan Dimbleby (CEO of Oxfam; Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem, Director of Oxfam; Joe Hanlon, Open University, Advisor to UK Government).



More than 250 people heard opinions from the world's poor. Questions were taken from the rally and G8 summit, MDG summit and from the public.

To listen to this debate visit
www.welldev.org.uk/

The study raises interesting questions: do the Thai respondents' reports on the sources of their wellbeing justify a different approach to wellbeing in developing countries? Do they support theories about the universality of human needs?

The main priorities of the Thai respondents support Doyal and Gough's theory which emphasizes human needs such as good health, significant relationships, adequate housing and economic security. But it also reveals many subtle subjective aspects of wellbeing such as being able to live a moral life, abide by social norms and have hopes and dreams. These are often neglected in mainstream development research. More work is needed to bridge the gap between universal indicators and those which have meaning and importance for people at a local level.

Mònica Guillén Royo and **Jackeline Velazco** use rural Thai data from the [Resources and Needs Questionnaire](#) to explore the relationship between subjective and objective dimensions of wellbeing. Respondents were asked to indicate how adequately their basic needs were being met in the five life domains of housing, food,

education, health care and income and how satisfied this made them feel. In addition, households were asked to assess their overall happiness.

The analysis follows the approach of happiness economics where happiness and satisfaction with life domains are explained by economic, social and demographic characteristics (Frei & Stutzer). However, the study goes further by investigating whether objective indicators of basic needs drawn from the Theory of Human Need (Doyal & Gough) do in fact explain people's own subjective views. The data was collected from household heads for the household as a whole. Regression models were used to empirically test these suggested relationships.

*For more detail on RANQ, see the RANQ toolbox online.
www.welldev.org.uk/research/methods-toobox/ranq-toolbox.htm*

The results show that respondents' assessment of their satisfaction with each of these domains – and their overall happiness – can be explained by whether or not their basic needs are met. In particular, there are lower levels of satisfaction where basic needs are not being met. For example, households with

high numbers of people affected by chronic illness, major disability or serious injuries report low levels of satisfaction with health care. Food shortages emerge as a significant factor explaining low levels of food satisfaction. Similarly, electricity, clean water and toilet facilities are important in determining satisfaction with housing. The extent to which a household is satisfied with its level of income is strongly related to how it perceives its wealth status relative to others. Further, all the domains were strongly related to asset ownership and the household's perceived relative wealth status.

The factors determining respondent's overall happiness are similar. The level of education of the household head, type of employment, the incidence of food shortages, material wealth (measured by wealth asset index) and relative perceptions of wealth again emerge as significant variables. Of particular interest is the finding that the precariousness associated with self-employment results in lower levels of happiness (consistent with findings from Peru and Russia of Graham and Pettinato). Further, the household's perception of its relative wealth status again proved to be a powerful determinant of happiness, similar to the above results for particular domains of basic needs.

This study confirms the relationship between objective indicators of basic needs and the household head's subjective assessment of satisfaction in particular domains, and overall happiness, using a theoretically based analysis. Moreover, the household's perceived relative wealth status is a useful predictor of its subjective satisfaction. Like the findings from the Quality of Life research above, it illustrates how social comparisons enter into people's assessments of their wellbeing. More work will be done to explore the relationships and causal links between these different factors.

Darunee Jongudomkarn (Thailand), Laura Camfield (Psychology), Mònica Guillén Royo (Social & Policy Sciences) and Jackeline Velazco (Economics) are all WeD Researchers.

Air discussion making aid more effective

Panel for ESRC Social Science Week (20th–24th June), hosted by the TV and Centre. Panel members included (left to right) Duncan Green, Head of Research for Justice Africa and General Secretary of the Pan African Movement; Jubilee 2000 and Allister McGregor, Director of WeD.



from the panel on key issues faced by those working to bring relief to the audience. Of particular relevance in the context of Live 8, the Edinburgh feature WTO talks was the discussion on aid and trade.

ate live, on-line go to
news/jdd-ep.htm

Conferences/Workshops Attended by WeD

Geof Wood (Bath) led a plenary session on security and wellbeing at IDS Alumni Reunion (April) titled 'Security or Insecurity: Changing States and Debates in Development'.

Allister McGregor (Bath) presented a paper on "Understanding the Social and Cultural Construction of Wellbeing in Specific Developing Societies" (May) at INTRAC NGO Research Forum.

Julie Newton (Bath) attended the DSA/BOND Event: "Research/Practice Interface in 2005: Actions for the Year and Beyond" (June).

James Copestake (Bath) presented a paper "Inequality and the ESRC Study Group on Wellbeing in Developing Countries" (June) at the Economic Analysis of Inequality Workshop, University of Bath organised by **Andy McKay**. Key themes include the multidimensional nature of inequality, the measurement of inequality, dynamic perspectives on inequality and the distinctive insights on inequality offered by WeD.

The WeD Working Paper Series can be found at www.welldev.org.uk/research/working.htm

Laura Camfield (Bath) discussed wellbeing at "The Pathways to Resilience: International Conference", Nova Scotia (June). She also presented initial QoL findings at the "Rethinking development: Local Pathways to Global Wellbeing conference, Nova Scotia".

Mònica Guillén Royo and **Jackeline Velazco** (Bath) presented "Exploring the relationship between happiness, objective and subjective well-being: Evidence from rural Thailand" at the Capabilities and Happiness Conference, Milan (June). Mònica also presented a poster "Can happiness be bought? If not, why do we keep buying?" at the Festival of Science, Dublin (August)

At the Social Policy Association Conference at Bath (June), **Ian Gough**, with Nic Marks of the New Economics Foundation, gave the final plenary lecture on "Theories of Well-being". Other WeD presenters were **Allister McGregor**:

"Can Policy cope with a concept of well-being", **Mònica Guillén Royo** and **Jackeline Velazco**: "Exploring the determinants of happiness: Evidence from rural Thailand and Ethiopia", and **Laura Camfield**: "The Why and How of Understanding 'Subjective' Wellbeing: Exploratory work by the WeD group in four developing countries".

Danny Ruta (Visiting Fellow) presented a paper written with **Laura Camfield** and **Cam Donaldson** entitled "Sen and the art of quality of life maintenance: Towards a general theory of quality of life and its causation" at the 5th International Conference on the Capability Approach: "Knowledge and Public Action", UNESCO, Paris (September).

Teófilo Altamirano (Peru) presented WeD findings at CERES, the Hague on migration and local development (June), the role of remittances in domestic economy in rural and urban areas at CELAM, Bogota (July), international migration and remittances at Catholic University of Sao Paulo, Brazil (September).

Jorge Yamamoto (Peru) presented a comparison of WeD QoL findings (May) with his previous research on the elderly in a teleconference broadcast in Peru, Ecuador, Honduras and Mexico hosted by the Development Global Network (World Bank, PUCP). He also presented QoL findings at EAFIT University, Medellin, Columbia (July) and the International Summit of Positive psychology, Washington DC (September). Jorge is working with practitioners (SNV Dutch NGO & IAP government agency) in the Amazonian communities using WeD QoL for natural resource management policy.

WeD Peru organised and presented papers (**Jorge**, **Teófilo** and **Jose Luis Alvarez**) in 'Human Development, Poverty and Wellbeing' symposium at the IV National Congress on Anthropological Research (August) on current Peru WeD Research.

Savittree Limchaianruang and **Malee Sabaiying** (Thailand) attended 1st annual conference on population and society organized by Institute of Population and social research, Mahidol University, Bangkok (July)

Pip Bevan, **Alula Pankhurst**, **Feleke Tadele**, **Bethlehem Tekola**, **Yisak Tafere**, **Workneh Abebe** and **Theodros W/Giorgis** (Ethiopia) presented initial WeD findings at the Ethiopian Economics Association Conference (June). Titles on www.welldev.org.uk/news/eea2005.htm **Iqbal Alam Khan** (Bangladesh) shared WeD findings at a workshop on crime statistics and governance by the Power and Participation Research Centre, Dhaka (March) and a workshop on Governance Issues by the Dept. of Development Studies, University of Dhaka (April). **Zulfiqar Ali** (Bangladesh) presented a series of papers on Bangladesh and MDGs at a seminar on "National Budget 2005-6 and the PRSP", Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), Dhaka and a training workshop organised by BIDS and the World Bank Institute (June).

Publications

Laura Camfield and **Allister McGregor** contributed a chapter on "Resilience and well-being in developing countries" to the *Handbook for Working with Children and Youth: Pathways to Resilience Across Cultures and Contexts*, edited by M. Ungar. (Sage Publications)

Ian Gough and David Clark (Global Poverty Research Group) contributed a chapter on "Capabilities, needs and well-being: relating the universal and the local" to *Rethinking Wellbeing*, edited by L. Manderson. (API-Network)

Fara Mee-Udon (Thailand) with Raneetarat contributed a chapter on "Women in Thailand: Changing the paradigm of female well-being" in *Female Well-being: Toward a Global Theory of Social Change*, edited by J. Mancini Billson and C. Fluehr-Lobban. (Zed Books)

Key Dates

Africa after 2005: from promises to policy, a one day policy forum organised by the ESRC and DSA (9th December), Church House, Westminster, London. The forum presents research from WeD, the Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation (CSGR), University of Warwick and the Global Poverty Research Group (GPRG), University of Oxford. While challenging and stimulating thinking among policymakers and NGOs, the focus will be practical and forward looking: how can the promises made in 2005 be turned into policy that delivers lasting change for Africa?

World Bank sponsored conference on **Development in a Globalizing World: New Frontiers of Social Policy**, Arusha, Tanzania, (13-15 December 2005). Both **Ian Gough** and **Geof Wood** will present papers at this international workshop.

To view the WeD Newsletter on-line see the website at www.welldev.org.uk/news/news.htm

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