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## International workshop: Researching Wellbeing in Developing Countries – *Ian Gough*

**What is human well-being and can it be measured? What can different academic disciplines contribute to this question? Can notions of well-being developed in the rich world be applied to poor countries in the South? How can it be researched in poor, partly illiterate, communities? These were some of the questions addressed at the first WeD international workshop held in the ultra-modern but hospitable Hanse Institute for Advanced Study in Germany in July.**

The workshop was co-sponsored by the United Nations University in Helsinki and the Hanse, and was directed by Ian Gough, Deputy Director of WeD. It had two key aims: first, to report on and evaluate the state-of-the-art understanding of well-being from different disciplinary perspectives and second, to evaluate our emerging strategies to research human well-being in four poor and middle income countries (Ethiopia and Bangladesh, Peru and Thailand). The workshop was organized around the three central themes of the WeD group: Needs, Quality of Life and Resources, in each case addressing both conceptual and methodological issues. Leading thinkers working on these themes were invited to dialogue with members of the WeD research team, including representatives from all four of the research countries. The result was a compact but wide-ranging interdisciplinary group from around the world.

The workshop was opened by Allister McGregor, Director of WeD, with a survey of the WeD approach to researching well-being in developing countries. In the first session, Des Gasper from the Institute for Social Studies at The Hague spoke on the link between human needs and human well-being, a topic also revisited by Ian Gough in his presentation. Sabina Alkire, from Harvard University and the Global Equity Initiative, tackled the question of how to measure capabilities and human freedom, while Geof Wood, WeD, did the same with human security. Pip Bevan and Alula Pankhurst, from Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia, presented initial findings from WeD research in Ethiopia and some of the questions which these were provoking.

Opening the QoL session Richard Ryan, Professor of Psychology at Rochester University, USA demonstrated how his Self Determination Theory identified universal psychological needs, while Monika Bullinger from Hamburg-Eppendorf University and the ISOQOL (International Society for Quality of Life Research) network surveyed the progress made in comparing quality of life across cultures. Fascinating examples of applied QoL research were provided from South Africa (Valerie Moller, Rhodes University), Mexico (Mariano Rojas, an economist from Universidad de las Americas-Puebla) and the European System of Social Indicators, (Heinz-Herbert Noll, Mannheim University).

The wider, more sociological and contextual approach to resources developed in the WeD team was presented in the third session by Sarah White and James Copestake from Bath and Awaie Masae from Thailand. Economists Mark McGillivray and Andy McKay then presented global comparative research findings on non-economic well-being and on vertical and horizontal inequality.

The last session opened with a paper by Pip Bevan on how essential it was to integrate a wide range of disciplines in this effort, but noted how forbidding the obstacles to this were. The two final speakers gave novel glimpses of the policy implications of the focus on well-being: Hetan Shah, of the New Economics Foundation in London, stressed that the British government was now taking seriously 'well-being' as an evaluative tool, while Charles Gore of UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) spoke of the contradictions between the global



Millennium Development Goals, national PRSPs and the local realities. He emphasised how important the WeD programme was to bridging these gaps.

The workshop participants probed the WeD research strategy and sharpened up some of our ideas. It also provided a good reality-test for our upcoming fieldwork methods. Ian Gough and Allister McGregor are now editing a selection of the papers into a book. But

as important a legacy is the buzz which the workshop discussions (and late night informal conversations) gave to all who attended, including five WeD postgraduate students, and the fillip it gave to the WeD programme.

**Ian Gough is Deputy Director of WeD and Professor at the Department of Social and Policy Sciences, University of Bath.**



*Workshop session at the Hanse Institute.*

Details of papers presented at the Hanse workshop may be found at [www.wellddev.org.uk/news/hanse.htm](http://www.wellddev.org.uk/news/hanse.htm)

## Postgraduate Reflections on Hanse Workshop

**Becky Schaaf** (First year PhD student using a non-linear systems approach to explore the structures and dynamics of savings groups in North-East Thailand)

"A central theme of the conference that I found particularly interesting was the importance of communicating within and beyond academia. This included considering how the WeD project and findings can inform and link with existing policy and development projects. The need for WeD to amalgamate or incorporate the approaches of different disciplines also appears crucial. As argued by Pip Bevan, the use of a variety of approaches can only enhance, rather than detract from, our understanding of the one reality that exists."

"The importance of looking beyond the research to consider how to communicate with various people and organisations and how to positively affect the lives of people in developing countries was emphasised by Hetan Shah and Charles Gore. Amongst the often highly theoretical and technical discussions, this focus on keeping sight of the end goals of the project and considering how to ensure the findings of WeD enter and influence policy discourse, seems fundamental to its ultimate success."

**Ashebir Desalegn** (First year PhD student from the Psychology department, Addis Ababa investigating the applicability of Self-Determination Theory (Aspiration goals and values indices) to an Ethiopian context)  
"The workshop offered a rare

opportunity for research students like me to meet and discuss issues of interest with renowned scholars that we have only known from the literature ... What I found particularly interesting was the vigour with which presenters put across their arguments, how hard they fought their corners, yet the participants' tolerance for diverse viewpoints whilst trying to get a coherent picture of well-being, inequalities and poverty."

"I learnt a lot about how to work towards a meaningful interdisciplinary dialogue. It also helped me look at the areas that interdisciplinary discourse could converge on (and diverge from) and, most importantly, how to build on points of convergence."

**Monica Guillen-Royo** (First year PhD student working on the relation between consumption and human need satisfaction)

"Researching consumption and well-being, as I am doing, is challenging because of the strong views people, either researchers or lay people, have about what they consume and the reasons behind their choices ... During the workshop, it was generally agreed that well-being is an umbrella concept and that notions of satisfaction, happiness and affect were commonly included in its definition. But it was more difficult to agree on a unified approach to research on well-being. The workshop helped to clarify those differences whilst presenting a challenge for the WeD group to reconcile the different research paradigms."

"Although consumption was not directly addressed, it was identified by several presenters as playing a central role for individual's well-being. In particular, Mariano Rojas summarised Subjective Well-being approaches highlighting the importance of domains of life such as family, economic and personal domains, with income playing a secondary role affecting the economic domain. In Thailand the changing consumption patterns were tackled by Awae Masae who underlined their two opposite effects on well-being, since life is becoming easier but indebtedness, and thus hardship is increasing... To sum up, the Hanse International workshop encouraged my research on consumption and well-being. It broadened my knowledge of the on-going discussions on well-being and provided interesting insights into the consequences of changing patterns of consumption in developing countries."

**Farung Mee-Udon** (First year PhD student focusing on the gendered dimensions of the universal health care scheme in rural Thailand)

"Understanding well-being faces certain challenges, including how academics communicate to the public on their research findings. Hanse demonstrated the importance of linking theoretical and practical research with policy formulation and action."

Further details of the work of these and other WeD Postgraduates may be seen at: [www.wellddev.org.uk/people/post-grad.htm](http://www.wellddev.org.uk/people/post-grad.htm)

## WeD's Resources and Needs Questionnaire (RANQ)

*Jackeline Velazco*

WeD is currently in the process of compiling and analysing the results of the Resources and Needs Questionnaire (RANQ): a survey instrument applied to 1000 households per country across a range of rural and urban communities within Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru and Thailand. The RANQ is a distinctive methodological tool designed to begin the exploration of the social and cultural constructions of well-being in developing countries.

RANQ is informed by WeD's theoretical framework comprising the Theory of Human Need; the Resource Profiles Approach; and Quality of Life work. In essence, well-being is understood as an 'outcome' which has objective, subjective and relational components. Well-being is secured by individuals through the 'processes' in which they organise different types of resources. Similarly, the pursuit of well-being is influenced by the 'meanings' that they assign to specific needs that they are trying to attain and the processes involved. Individuals achieve states of well-being through a series of relations with wider structures ranging from their household, through community to the nation-state and global economy.

This integrated framework identifies the main foci of empirical research. Essentially these can be classified as outcomes, processes and meanings. Therefore, the WeD Framework proposes that there are three central categories of data to be collected and analysed:

- a) on what people/households/communities/nations **have** or do not have (material and human resources, social relationships, status, and other resources)
- b) on what people **do** or cannot do with these resources
- c) on how people **think** about what they have (do not have) and can or cannot do with what they have.

Although available secondary data (e.g. national census and household surveys) offers information on what households have and do, the RANQ generates its own data set

that provides a comprehensive picture at the individual, household, community level that links these to how people think. More specifically, it gathers information on household resources (human, material, natural, social and cultural), the extent of needs satisfaction for households (eg health, education, food and housing) and long-term shocks and fortunes. Many questions are identical across the four countries; others have been adjusted to each country's characteristics. The same coding system and data verification procedures are being used to guarantee that comparable data are collected across the sites in all countries to facilitate cross-country analysis.

RANQ is organised into six sections. The first describes the organisation of the household and is followed by a general assessment of subjective well-being. The third section focuses on a household's human resources and collects information on household members' occupations, education and health. The fourth collects data on household access and use of material resources such as land and natural resources, livestock, asset ownership, housing utilities and sanitation. It also gathers data on long-term shocks and fortunes, food shortages and clothing, wealth, transfers and income support. Both the third and fourth sections include questions on household's perceptions, expectations and satisfaction on various resource dimensions. The fifth section provides data on social resources such as kin and fictive relations, connections to the local community, to the wider world, to markets and government. The last section collects information on cultural resources such as language, social identity and honorific titles.



*Working with villagers in Thailand.*

The RANQ data permits analysis a) within a site, b) among sites of the same country by rural and urban areas, and c) a comparison across the four countries; thus allowing the following general research questions to be analysed:

- 🌾 What is the relationship between quality of life (subjective and objective) and access to resources (human, material, social and cultural), long-term shocks and fortunes, and access to government services? Is there any relevant difference between urban and rural sites?
- 🌾 To what extent is quality of life affected by household participation in: a) labour market (as self-employed or wage-worker), b) product market (buyer and seller), c) credit market, and d) input markets?
- 🌾 To what extent are the findings of each research site related to the poverty/inequality/quality of life indicators at the national level? If a different pattern is identified, how can such differences be explained?

These findings inform a more detailed quantitative and qualitative data collection stage using sub-samples of individuals and households obtained from the RANQ stage. This procedure will offer a more comprehensive understanding of the 'outcomes' achieved by individuals and households as well as the 'processes' and 'meanings' that have contributed to these outcomes. This next phase will consequently study the ways in which people conceive of their quality of life or subjective well-being using a range of anthropological, sociological and psychological approaches and methods.

**Jackeline Velazco is a WeD Research Officer, Economics of Development, based at the University of Bath.**

## Conferences/Workshops Attended by WeD

**Ian Gough** presented the new Bath book, *Insecurity and Welfare Regimes in Developing Countries* at the 4th International Conference on the Capability approach held at the University of Pavia, Italy (July) with the theme of "Enhancing Human Security". During the meeting, the Human Development and Capability Association (HDCA) was launched by its president Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, and deputy president, the eminent philosopher Martha Nussbaum with the aim of promoting high quality cross-disciplinary research in the interconnected areas of human development and capability.

Ian also attended a workshop held in H.M. Treasury (October) that brought academics, think-tankers and policy advisors together to discuss the policy implications of including 'promoting well-being' as a policy goal for the British government. It provided a unique opportunity to discuss a number of different streams such as the Happiness Report, soon to be submitted to the Cabinet Office, the New Economics Foundation's Well-Being Manifesto, the ESRC's Environment and Human Behaviour Programme, the Listening to Children Study and the Sustainable Communities Plan.

*The WeD Working Paper Series can be found at [www.welldev.org.uk/research/working.htm](http://www.welldev.org.uk/research/working.htm)*

**Allister McGregor** (Director of WeD), **Katie Wright-Revolledo** and **Laura Camfield** attended a symposium on "Well-being and anthropological perspectives", at the University of Manchester, Faculty of Social Anthropology (September) where Allister gave a paper on "Cultures and the construction of well-being".

**James Copestake**, **Susan Johnson** and **Katie Wright-Revolledo** played an active role in the final global meeting of the **Imp-Act** programme (September) hosted by the Centre of Development Studies, Bath. This was followed by a two-day workshop organised by **MicroSave** (a programme to promote secure, high quality savings for poor

people, funded by SUM/UNDP Africa and DFID), in which Susan was involved. See [www.Imp-Act.org](http://www.Imp-Act.org) and [www.MicroSave.org](http://www.MicroSave.org)

**Jorge Yamamoto** (WeD-Peru) used WeD data to present papers on qualitative and quantitative methods in Anthropology and Psychology interdisciplinary work at Universidad Nacional del Centro in Huancayo (June); and on organizational psychology relating to job satisfaction at EAFIT University in Medellin, Columbia (August). He also used WeD findings to contribute to a roundtable discussion on conflicts between natives of the Amazon rainforest and external stakeholders organised by the Peruvian Amazonian Research Institute.

**Teofilo Altamirano** (WeD-Peru) presented papers at the Latin American Economic System in Caracas, Venezuela on Poverty Alleviation and Remittances (July); and the Inca Museum in Cuzco, Peru on new economic anthropology and the analysis of rural households within the Peruvian Central Sierra (August) based on WeD data. He was also involved in a national radio broadcast (August) discussing the expected outcomes of the WeD project.

**Pip Bevan** together with **Alula Pankhurst** and **Derese Getachew** (WeD-Ethiopia) presented papers based on WIDE 2 (Wellbeing and Illbeing Dynamics 2) data at the Ethiopian Economics Association Conference (June) on mothers and babies under stress, HIV/AIDS, and government extension packages. **Feleke Tadele** gave a paper titled "Urban Poverty Studies in Ethiopia: A Methodological Review" (June) at a workshop on "Chronic Urban Poverty in Ethiopia" held in Ethiopia organised by the Chronic Poverty Research Centre, University of Manchester, in collaboration with the Ethiopian Economics Association. Alula also presented a paper on conceptions and responses to HIV/AIDS based on WIDE 2 data to the Ethiopian Society of Sociologists, Social

### Key Dates

**The Development Studies Association (DSA) Conference 2004** with the theme of "Bridging Research and Policy" will be held on 6 November at Church House, Westminster, London. **Awae Masae** and **Buncha Somboonsuke** (WeD-PSU) will attend an international conference on "**Southeast Asia: Development and Change in an era of Globalization**" in Khon Kaen University Thailand (29 November - 2 December) organised by "The Research Center, Mekong Regional Tourism".

## WeD - An ESRC Research Group

Workers and Anthropologists' annual meeting (July).

**Pip Bevan** (WeD Bath) attended a meeting at LSE, London, to advise the Commission for Africa. It was attended by a number of prominent academics from a variety of disciplines as well as Sir Bob Geldof who is also liaising with the other Commissions for Africa. These are active in each of the G8 countries. See [www.commissionforafrica.org](http://www.commissionforafrica.org)

**Buapun Promphakping** (WeD- Thailand, PSU) used WeD findings to present a paper titled "Poverty in the Mekong Region" (July) at an international conference focused on "The Changing Mekong: Pluralistic Society Under Siege" organized by the Centre for Research on Plurality in the Mekong Region (CERP), Khon Kaen University. WeD-Thailand (KKU) participated in the Southern Thailand Agricultural Fair, Prince of Songkla University in August.

### Publications

**Alula Pankhurst** and **Pip Bevan's** paper on "Hunger and poverty in Ethiopia: local perceptions of famine and famine response" was published in *Humanitarian Exchange*. See [www.odihpn.org](http://www.odihpn.org)

From WeD-Bangladesh, **Iqbal Khan** and **Zulfiqar Ali** contributed to the Country Report titled "Chronic Poverty in Bangladesh: tales of Ascent, Descent, Marginality and Persistence", edited by Binayak Sen, Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies, Bangladesh and David Hulme, Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC), University of Manchester. Iqbal and Zulfiqar also participated in the CPRC dissemination workshop study (May) on chronic poverty in Bangladesh See [www.chronicpoverty.org](http://www.chronicpoverty.org)

**Munshi Israil Hossain** submitted an article titled "Internal Labour Migration: Recuperating or intimidating the livelihoods of those who stay away and who stay put in rural Bangladesh?" in 'Social Science Review', Dhaka University.

To view the WeD Newsletter on-line see the website at [www.welldev.org.uk/news/news.htm](http://www.welldev.org.uk/news/news.htm)

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