PART II

Human development: Key concepts
The capability approach
Background

- Pioneering works of Amartya Sen
- Standard of living lies in the living and not in the possession of commodities. It lies in what people value doing and being.
- Key concepts: functionings, capabilities and agency
Functionings/capabilities

- Functionings: valuable activities and states that make up people’s wellbeing.
- Capability (or freedom): a person’s ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of beings. Capabilities reflect the real opportunities people have to lead or achieve a certain kind of life.
- Fasting monk and starving child example
Compare with incomes or resources

- Personal heterogeneities
- Environmental diversities
- Variations in social climate (extent of public services)
- Cultural differences
- Distribution within the family
Compare with happiness

- The happy slum dwellers in India
- Indian widows: subjective vs. objective health
- Adaptive preferences
Agency

- A person’s ability to pursue and realize goals s/he values and has reason to value

- Wellbeing and agency distinction (opportunity and process aspect of freedom)

- Example of Aung San Suu Kyi: What is her state of wellbeing and agency?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkML_mqe7Lc  (Youtube campaign for Burma)
Some misunderstandings

- Capabilities translated as ‘choices’
- Priority of freedom: always?
- Capabilities of individuals only?
- CA is not a theory of justice but an evaluation framework.
- Non-specification of valuable freedoms: development is about expanding the ‘freedoms that people have reason to choose and value’
Nussbaum’s capabilities approach:

- 1) Life;
- 2) Bodily health;
- 3) Bodily integrity;
- 4) Senses, imagination, and thought;
- 5) Emotions;
- 6) Practical reason;
- 7) Affiliation;
- 8) Other species;
- 9) Play;
- 10) Control over one’s environment.
From capability approach to human development

- Friendship between Sen and ul Haq
- The birth of the Human Development Reports
- Translation of capability approach into policy:
  - Human Development Index and others
  - Principles (for project programming): Equity; Efficiency; Participation; Sustainability.

Human development related ideas
Basic needs

**Definition**

‘An approach that attempts to provide the opportunities for the full physical, mental and social development of human personality and then derives the ways of achieving this objective. Nonmaterial needs are important not only because they are valued in their own right, but also because they are important conditions for meeting material needs. They include the needs for self-determination, self-reliance, and security, for the participation of workers and citizens in the decision-making that affects them, for national and cultural identity, and for a sense of purpose in life and work. (Streeten *et al.*, 1981, pp. 33-4)
The basic needs approach

- Background: ILO study in 1970s
- Initial emphasis on providing the conditions for a full human life (material, social, cultural and political).
- BNA: incomes + public services + participation (Streeten)
- But in operational terms, it focused on the goods and services needed to realise it: shelter, food sanitation, health services, sanitation, safe water, primary education, housing and infrastructure.
Human development and basic needs

- Greater conceptual foundations
- Focus on agency and participation
- Developed and developing country applicability
Human rights

- All humans should be free and equal in dignity and rights (right to work, to education, to health, non-discrimination, to movement, etc.)

- Human rights are linked to obligations: state is to guarantee these rights
Human rights and human development

- Quality and dignity of human life is the objective
- But HD does not focus on state and legislation alone: broader institutional analysis
- CA focuses on different means: e.g. to provide right to health, people will need different institutions and opportunities.
Millennium Development Goals

- MDGs are targets, they do not reflect other dimensions of human development.
- In the list of MDGS, identity some dimensions of human development that are absent: [http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/)
- MDGs do not take into account inequality and distribution.
- Little concern for participation and empowerment.
Exercise


Analyse the situation of that Andean community from the perspective of

a) Capability Approach/ Human Development
b) Human Rights
c) Economic (utilitarian) approach

In your opinion, what is the strength of the capability approach for development, and the social sciences more widely?