

Introducing the WeD research programme and the ways in which it can inform policy

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Outline of the talk

- **Introducing the WeD research programme**
- **Questions and comments**
- **Using academic social research to inform policy**
- **Questions and comments**

Introducing the WeD research

- **Four-country multi-disciplinary academic study 2002 - 2007**
- **An exploratory research programme whose purposes include:**
 1. **to introduce to development research and practice**
 - (1) a clearer focus on people
 - (2) new methods to study them and their contexts
 2. **to explore how people in local communities think about 'well' and 'ill' being**

Introducing the WeD research (continued)

- An exploratory research programme (cont.):
 3. to explore how differences in life quality are produced within the social contexts of
unequally structured
 - households
 - communities
 - country
 - world

Introducing the WeD research (continued)

- An exploratory research programme (cont.):
 4. to draw conclusions
 - for the country
 - for similar countries
 - for development theory
 - for empirical research
 - development policy and practice

A clearer focus on people

- **Going beyond....**
 - ‘households’ and ‘the poor’
 - ‘health’ and ‘education’
 - ‘gender’, ‘youth’, child labour
 - ‘empowerment’ ‘participation’
- **People are social actors**
 - people make choices
 - people’s choices relate to their cultural values and beliefs

A clearer focus on people (continued)

- People are social actors (continued)
 - people's actions also relate to their social roles and relationships
 - people's actions often have well/ill being consequences for other people as well as themselves
 - their own well/ill being is affected by the actions of other people
 - development depends on changes in choices and actions

A realistic focus on people

- **Gender differences and the human lifecycle**
 - local definitions of well/ill being and well- and ill- doing are different for
 - girls and boys
 - female and male adolescents
 - adult men and women
 - old men and women
 - social roles within households, communities and the country vary
 - thus the choices open to different kinds of people vary

A realistic focus on people

- **‘Genderage’ differences (continued)**
 - decisions to migrate vary according to gendered position in the life cycle
 - the effects of decisions to migrate by significant others vary
- **An example of ways in which these differences matter:**
 - WeD evidence of threats to life quality according to gendered position in the life cycle

Person Life Quality

- **Baby girls and boys - THREATS**
 - harm to mother during pregnancy, birth, early life
 - mother unable to breastfeed
 - disease, unclean water, poor sanitation, malnutrition
 - no clothes, no vaccination, no or poor medical treatment

Person Life Quality (continued)

THREATS

- **‘Knee and roaming’ boys and girls**
 - similar threats as to babies
 - plus threats from moving in the natural environment
 - plus threats from the social environment – violence, work
 - in the RANS sample ‘the main activity in the last month’ of 8% of 3-6 year olds was herding, childcare or fetching wood or water

Person Life Quality (continued)

- **‘Working and learning’ girls and boys**

THREATS

- similar to younger children
- particularly too much work, or work that is too hard
- the main activity of 35% of boys and 38% of girls was work
- boys and girls may be beaten by adults and older siblings
- at school: 45.7% boys and 40.5% girls
- girls at risk of abuse

Person Life Quality (continued)

THREATS

- **Male adolescents and VYAs**
 - failing to establish personal identities and relationships in the community
 - failing in negotiations over work, income, education, access to their own productive resources
 - the attractions of drinking, chewing chat, fighting, and womanising

Person Life Quality (continued)

THREATS

- **Female adolescents and VYAs**
 - failing to establish personal identities and community relationships
 - rape and abduction
 - usually heavily burdened with domestic work
 - cultural pressures to get married when they don't want to

Person Life Quality (continued)

THREATS

- **Adult women**
 - infertility
 - problems related to pregnancy, childbirth, infancy
 - too many pregnancies
 - maternal anxieties about the survival and prospering of children

Person Life Quality (continued)

THREATS

- **Adult women**
 - no daughters
 - too much work
 - violence from husbands and sons
 - widowhood and divorce

Person Life Quality (continued)

THREATS

- **Adult men**
 - no / inadequate livelihood resources
 - low status in the community
 - becoming ‘defeated’ – ‘laziness’, drink / chat
 - no wife / death of wife

Person Life Quality (continued)

THREATS

- **Adult men**
 - no children / no sons
 - badly behaved children
 - failure to meet patriarchal responsibilities
 - violent conflicts with neighbours and others in / beyond the community;
war

Person Life Quality (continued)

THREATS

- **Old people**
 - no control of livelihood resources such as land or livestock
 - no partner / bad relations with partner
 - bodily decline leading to disabilities and chronic ill-health
 - no or inadequate healthcare

Person Life Quality (continued)

THREATS

- **Old people**
 - decline in the status of the elderly / disrespect
 - no children or uncaring children
 - inability to find meaning in the life that is coming to an end

Questions and comments

Using academic social research to inform policy

- A major goal of academic social science is to find out how societies, economies, politics, and cultures work.
- This involves using theoretical ideas and research methods to establish ‘truths’ about the world
- Some ideas, methods and ‘truths’ eventually work their way into policy and practice discourses

Using academic social research to inform policy (continued)

- The dominant concepts, ideas and methods currently used in policy and practice discourses come from the discipline of economics
- There is huge scope to rationalise the communication links between
 - policy makers and practitioners; and
 - sociologists, social anthropologists, and political scientists

Using academic social research to inform policy (continued)

- **Academic research is designed in the context of university-based disciplines and the academic chooses the topic and approach**
- **Research for policy and practice is usually commissioned by government / donors / NGOs in the light of their current interests**
- **Research is usually done by consultants following terms of reference**

Using academic social research to inform policy (continued)

- **Consultants rarely have time to keep up with the new ideas, theories and methods under development within academic disciplines**
- **Academics are not qualified to make policy recommendations**
- **A role for academics: to increase the background knowledge and understanding of consultants, policy makers and practitioners**

Using academic social research to inform policy (continued)

- **A role for consultants and practitioners**
 - to use this knowledge and understanding to criticise and inform current development ideas and practices
- **Ways of making connections**
 - writing and reading books
 - writing research papers and briefings on topics of interest to donors
 - academic / practitioner workshops
 - go-betweens
 - other?

Using academic social research to inform policy (continued)

- **Connecting through the WeD Ethiopia book:**
 - a new conceptual framework and methods which present some challenges to the current orthodoxies
 - identification of the important causal mechanisms involved in the generation of well- and ill- being in Ethiopia
 - analysis of country and international contexts

Using academic social research to inform policy (continued)

- **Connecting through the WeD book (continued):**
 - descriptions and interpretations of local experiences and perspectives in Ethiopia
 - descriptions of social and cultural structures and patterns of inequality at community and household levels
 - descriptions of mobilisations for and against a range of changes by different kinds of community actor

Using academic social research to inform policy (continued)

- **Connecting through papers for donors:**
e.g. Irish Aid paper
 - conceptual analysis – what kinds of migration exist?
 - commuting on a daily basis
 - seasonal and short-term migration
 - long-term migration within Ethiopia
 - international migration
 - one implication is that there are a number of different potential ‘policy objects’

Using academic social research to inform policy (continued)

- **Irish Aid paper (continued)**
 - **descriptions and interpretations of local experiences and perspectives related to migration**
 - **descriptions of the consequences of migration for**
 - **different kinds of migrant**
 - **the people, households and communities they have left behind**
 - **the places where they have settled**

Using academic social research to inform policy (continued)

- **Irish Aid paper (continued)**
 - **contains descriptions of some of the social and cultural structures underpinning migration**
 - **the findings are used to suggest policy implications (from an NGO perspective)**

Using academic social research to inform policy (continued)

- **Connecting through academic / practitioner workshops: e.g. this one**
 - **Academic input:**
 - paper leading to a research briefing, three presentations (with no recommendations)
 - **Practitioner input:**
 - working groups – govt, donors, NGOs, academics
 - reporting back and discussion

Using academic social research to inform policy (continued)

- **Connecting through academic / practitioner workshops**
 - **Question:**
 - **What are the implications of the reported research for government / donors / NGOs / academics?**
 - **Output:**
 - **A policy brief using the workshop expertise**

Questions and comments