

Different Perceptions of Poverty – Different Forms of Poverty

A report based on Amartya Sen's Capability Approach

Centre for Action Research and People's Development CARPED, Hyderabad, India.
AIESEC Development Traineeship February 15 - May 15, 2004. Lukas Schweizer.

Once we went to Charminar to see the historical part of Hyderabad.

Fortunately a 14 years young Muslim boy called Ali wanted to guide us there.

On the way back I asked the smart young Ali which profession he would like to become.

He told me that he had two dreams:

To become a pilot and to get as rich as Bill Gates.

Surprised because of his second dream I posed him the following question:

“Do you think that rich people are happier?”

Ali answered in the affirmative with a determined Indian shake of the head...

Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. A short summary of Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach.....	2
3. Different perceptions of poverty.....	4
4. A brief comparison of the tribal life and the life in urban slums: poverty in rural and urban areas.....	14
5. Conclusion and suggestions.....	20
6. References.....	23

1. Introduction

Poverty concerns probably every country in our world. But the nature of the poverty phenomenon differs from nation to nation. In industrialized countries like Switzerland the phenomenon of working poor has become important in the last few years. Whereas in India death because of famines due to droughts still occurs. There are also various understandings of the notion of poverty, and still poverty is mostly measured in terms of money which does not present an adequate indicator. As a consequence the poverty lines used to determine poverty ratios vary as well. These facts are the reason for the following structure of my study and raise the main question: What is poverty?

First of all I will start with a short summary of the Amartya Sen's Capability Approach in part two. This outlines a worthy approach to determine poverty in an adequate way and is therefore a formal answer to the main question mentioned above. The aim of this paper is provided in section three: a definition of poverty based on the society's perception of poverty and on the Capability Approach, namely by concentrating in a multidimensional way on ends and not only on means like money. These concerns are motivated, as already mentioned above, by the fact that poverty comparisons are especially difficult to conduct between different countries. Different societies have different perceptions and definitions of poverty. A poor Swiss person cannot be easily compared with a poor Indian because the kind of poverty is quite different. Further, money is not an appropriate indicator to measure the extent and the depth of poverty. It is only a means to reach multiple ends that constitute the well-being of a person. In a next step I try to give an idea of how to implement Sen's approach while comparing briefly the different kinds of poverty in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh by focusing on the tribal villages in the rural area of the Medak District and the slums in Hyderabad. In this forth section the practical use of Sen's Capability Approach is emphasized. Conclusion and suggestions for further development strategies are withdrawn in chapter five from analyzing these two parts while stressing and respecting the value of freedom to choose. The methodologies I use are simple observations and interviews with Indian academics, concerned indigenous people (tribes) and inhabitants of slums. Where possible I refer to consulted literature. Although I try to be as scientific as possible the study should be considered as a report of my own experiences and

interpretations of the collected facts. I am completely aware of possible biases caused by different sources like translation problems, unrepresentative samples and so on.

2. A short summary of Amartya Sen's Capability Approach

In the literature there exist several approaches to define and identify poverty. Mainly classifications are reduced to poverty as an objective or subjective and absolute or relative term.¹ Further, poverty is mostly defined or at least measured in a one-dimensional way by using money as an indicator. But it is obvious that not every person can get the same (you can think of utility, standard of living, well-being or whatever you like to consider as a goal) out of an equal amount of money. The satisfaction of the goal by using money as a means depends on several factors internal and external to the human being. That is exactly one motivating element of the Capability Approach its main features I explain in this section.² To do it as simple as possible I start with a clear and convincing example.

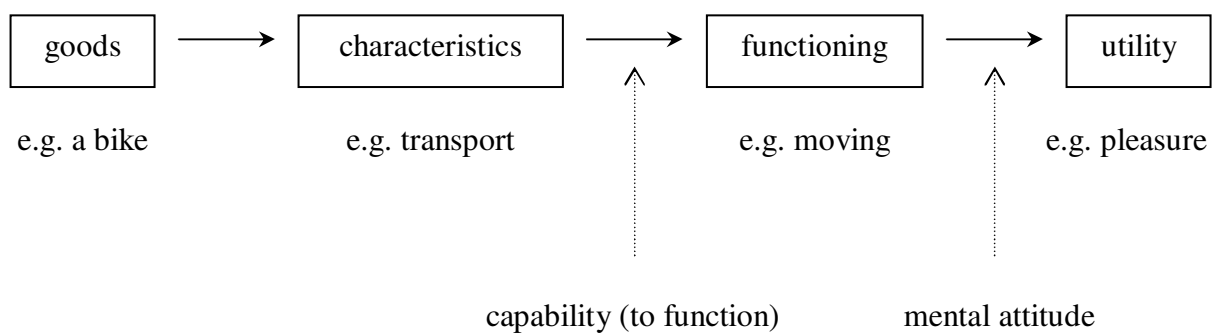
Imagine there is a good, namely a bike. This good, it is a material good to be more precise, inheres certain characteristics. In this case one characteristic, possibly besides others, can be described as transport. The good in question, here our bike, makes an achievement possible for a person while using the good. But the good itself does not guarantee for an achievement, it is only essential as a means to the achievement. And of course, there are other possible means as for example a car. Sen calls the achievement functioning and in our example it can be called moving. The crucial point now lies in what the person can achieve with the good and its characteristics given the external circumstances and the personal abilities. This element that fills up the gap between the characteristics and the functioning Sen calls capability to function. From this point of view, a person who does not have the capability to function – in this context the capability to move with the bike – for example because of being physically disabled, cannot achieve the functioning with this given means.

¹ For an overall and detailed overview about poverty and its latest research check out for example the homepage of the United Nations: www.un.org, 10.5.2004.

² This summary of Sen's Capability Approach is implicitly based on different literature familiar to me and investigated during my thesis work. Here, I present my own synthesis and therefore do not always refer

Achieving a functioning can lead to utility. The utility itself depends on the mental attitude of the person in question.

Presentation 1: Theoretical relations of well-being



Source: Own presentation following Sen (1982: 30) and Muellbauer (1987: 40).

Sen defines the crucial notion of functioning as following: „A functioning is an achievement of a person: what he or she manages to do or to be. It reflects, as it were, a part of the ‘state’ of that person. It has to be distinguished from the commodities which are used to achieve those functionings.“ (Sen 1985: 10). The capability to function on the other hand indicates that the person is able to realize a certain achievement, a functioning, and at the same time leaves the person the freedom to choose between doing so or not: „The *capability* of a person reflects the alternative combinations of functionings the person can achieve, and from which he or she can choose one collection.“ (Sen 1993: 31). For instance, there is a difference between fasting and starving. Fasting is an active chosen situation of hunger whereas starving is determined by the fact that somebody does not have enough food available. Sen`s Capability Approach emphasizes thus the value of freedom to choose.

His approach catches the crucial element of individual well-being from which poverty can be derived as a lack of having opportunities to generate well-being: poverty as a lack of

explicitly to the source. However, for further details please see the following indicated literature: Sen (1982, 1984, 1985, 1987, 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999), Muellbauer (1987), Alkire (2002) and Nussbaum (2000).

capabilities to function. This definition takes into account the value of freedom to choose by considering freedom as an element of well-being. Sen's approach has further the advantage that it does not rely on means itself but on ends thus giving up the opulence based definition of well-being and poverty. Also the focus on utility concepts does not persist anymore in his idea. Whereas opulence and its characteristic of providing only means to ends does not guarantee the same amount of well-being for everybody, utility is distracted by the fact that it is a question of mental attitude how much utility somebody can generate out of a certain situation. Stressing freedom to choose, giving up the opulence perspective and utility based concepts of well-being and poverty are in summary the main characteristics and advantages of the Capability Approach. Further, it concentrates on individuals rather than households within which discrimination can occur. Of course, there are also a few disadvantages especially concerning its operation. The main question is 'How can we observe capabilities to function?' Functionings themselves are observable because they are realized achievements. But capabilities to function actually represent a set of alternative potential functionings out of which one is realized and the others are not chosen. Sen's approach does not say anything about the characteristics of well-being and poverty. It is only a formal concept that has to be filled up by the opinion and understanding of the society in question. Exactly this point incorporates both an advantage and disadvantage. It is good that this approach can be adapted to different societal understandings of poverty. But to evaluate well-being or poverty it is necessary to establish a list of relevant capabilities and their indicators which constitute well-being. Further, it is useful that we aggregate them to get an overall quantitative picture of individual and societal well-being and poverty. These two steps require an adequate method of evaluation in order to weigh, which because of the normative issue, bear the main difficulties in implementing this approach.

3. Different perceptions of poverty

When I saw a tribal village for the first time I thought that probably even there exist people who are poorer or richer than other community members. Motivated by this assumption I wanted to find out who is supposed to be poor or rich by their perspective. Out of their

opinion I can hopefully draw conclusions about their valuing of living standards and different states of well-being. This information is useful and essential to create a list of different capabilities, functionings or simply dimensions of well-being. To do this I tried to ask the following same questions the various people. In any case, the questions have obviously had to be adapted and modified to their level of understanding and in the end some questions have not been asked at all. Anyway, these questions should serve as a guideline for the current chapter.

1. What is your definition of poverty? Who is rich, who is poor?
2. Do you think poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon and a relative term depending on the society (time and place)?
3. What dimensions are important to the Indian society?
4. How would you value freedom – the opportunity to choose among a set of alternatives?
5. How do you value having sufficient nutrition, good health (physical and mental), sufficient shelter/housing, environment, education, being socially accepted?
6. What do you think, is the life better in a tribal village or in a big city like Hyderabad?
7. Would you agree that poverty is a lack of having opportunities to generate well-being?

I talked to four people of Mondri Thanda to get information about their perception of poverty. Before I start with the results a few basic facts about this tribal village of the Kowdipally Mandal in the Medak District need to be established for an overall impression. Mondri Thanda, a village where Lambada tribes live, is situated about 70 km away from Hyderabad. There are 27 houses and an equal number of families living at this place. The total population amount to 129 persons, whereas 69 are male and 60 female. On average a family consists of less than five members. Out of these 129 people 12 are children between

0-5 years and 85 between 6-14 years (42♂, 43♀).³ From a European point of view I would say that these tribes live really basically. For further information about their standard of living I refer to section four.

To get as valuable and representative information and opinions as possible I tried to speak with two women and two men on Wednesday March 10, 2004, within the gender each of a younger and elder age. But that was not so easy. Because of the fact that I am a foreigner we were soon surrounded by several people of the community. Further sometimes every man wanted to talk at the same time. Really interesting for me was the fact that the women seem to speak only after the men have spoken or if they are asked to speak. For me it is an indication of discrimination.

The first man who is between 30 and 35 years old told me that poverty is equal to a state without food. He mentioned also that rich means to have better houses and to own more land. But on the other side he continued people with much land have also more debt and are therefore not really better off. Electricity for example is considered by this man as a luxury and work is related to earning money. But because of the climate and the population pressure it is not easy to get enough out of cultivation. Whereas the climate influences the crop in a direct way by reducing it, the population growth requires a higher total amount of produce. According to his statement the land will be equally passed on to the sons. That means that a certain land size is automatically reduced in the future if there is more than one son. To the question of how he values health he answered that health was essential for work but it was also important that the person had the mind to work. Education makes people richer because they have more opportunities. Normally they leave the village as he said. The status of poor people is inferior, leading to social exclusion according to him. He would lend them money. Whereas rich people enjoy a superior status they are socially accepted in his opinion. For this tribal man freedom is if somebody else is working for him and he is served while lying down under the fan. With the life in the village he is happy because he knows that he has to work everywhere whether in the village or in the city.

The second person I interviewed was a woman of the age between 40 and 50 years. Her definition of poverty is to have no harvest. Hard work is related to earnings. She said that

³ These data are from the statistics of the end of 2003 available at CARPED office in Kowdipally (only available in Telugu).

you had to make an effort and somebody who was working and had no money was also poor. The priority in life is health according to her. The argument goes as following: Without a good health you are limited in working and as a consequence you will earn less. Persons who work less are socially unaccepted according to her statements. And she would advise them to work harder. Educated people have more opportunities and so they can go elsewhere whereas uneducated people have to stay here in the village. She considers well built houses as safer because these houses have solid walls and doors that are lockable. In her opinion the life in the village is better than the life in the city because there is land to cultivate. Unfortunately the interview was interrupted because the people there had to go out for a wedding in another village. Her husband advised her in a quite rude tone to finish the conversation immediately and to leave. So we went to another group of people in Mondli Thanda in order to continue the interviews.

The third and the fourth interviewed Lambada persons live in Mondli Thanda as well but their houses are situated separately maybe around 50m next to the main part of Mondli Thanda. One man about 30 years old told me that poverty for him is having no land and no cattle. Also a lack of water and the existence of debt are important elements of poverty because these elements determine respectively reduce the earnings.⁴ According to his statements good health is essential for earning and bad health is expensive because there could be a need to go to the hospital. And this means that added earnings are necessary to pay the health expenses. Education is not highly valued by this man. For him it is better and easier to work in the agriculture sector. The house he lives in is quite basic from our perspective and probably one of the worst in Mondli Thanda.⁵ But he is happy with it and explained that it was possible to adapt. And on the other hand a house has to be maintained which requires earnings that have to increase with the higher quality of a house according to his statement. These people there live together in a community and because of that they do not discriminate against the poor. This was in answer to my question of how they value social acceptance and represents a good example how differently they can understand a question. If the harvest is good then he is free because he can afford every expense. That is

⁴ The emphasis of water was quite strong I felt, probably they still have severe water problems there.

⁵ This statement is quite vague because I did not go into the house for a more profound examination of the living standard and available amenities of the house. Therefore it should be considered as an assumption based on the fact that his house only has a thatched roof.

his evaluation of freedom. With his life in the village he is happy and does not like to go elsewhere.

A 70 year old female inhabitant told me that poverty was to have no water, as a consequence no crop and in the end no earnings. If you can eat well, you are happy and if you have a good health, then you can lead a good life. Education was good for her sons she said, but for her the harvest was more important than education. Houses with slopes she considers as better because it was cooler. People who have more cattle have a better status in her eyes than people with less cattle. The latter are treated worse and she also looks down on them. If there is harvest she can lie back and enjoy life: good harvest means more money and good houses. That reflects the value of freedom in her opinion. I also asked her if she preferred the rural or urban life. „Who would care about me in the city? “ she asked without expecting an answer and went on telling that for her it was better to live there in the village because she could cultivate crop there.

On Wednesday March 24, 2004 I had the occasion to interview three academics of the Kakatiya University in Warangal. In this group discussion there were Mrs. Dr. E. Revathi (Reader in economics at the Kakatiya University in Warangal), Mr. Sudheer Kodati and Mr. Dr. Sanjeer Reddy (Reader in political science, Kakatiya University) present. In the following I integrate all their statements in one group opinion because the conversation was characterized by a continuing process of developing this represented opinion. And therefore it would not be adequate to assign one single statement to one single person because it is out of the procedural context of the interview.

In their opinion poverty is inadequate nutrition which is fulfilled with around 2400 kcal (per day and person supposedly). Further, besides the basic nutrition there are also other elements like the housing situation (having a roof for instance) and the health. They differentiate also from the specific and narrowly defined income poverty which is determined by the poverty line and stress again that not only income matters. Also other amenities like food, access to education, health, quality of life, living standard, safe drinking water, preventive health care etc. are mentioned once more. In their view the definition is changing and poverty, they all agree, is relative, depending on the context and is not comparable between different countries because of the different necessities. The

question concerning freedom to choose was answered by first mentioning that in India there is no choice. But they consider having choice as very important and having freedom may lead to well-being. Gender issues for instance can reduce the freedom according to them. There was also an interesting difference in understanding of the term freedom. These academics do not equate having freedom with having choice. The question of which life they prefer, rural or urban, was quite confusing for them. It seemed to me that because of their academic background in poverty this question did not make sense for them to answer it from their point of view. But anyway, I was interested in getting their opinion and perception of the value of these two different kinds of life. The starting answer was a general statement: to feel comfortable where a living is found. In a (rural) village, there are no earnings, but in a bigger city (than Warangal) the life is also not better because of the high pollution and the traffic. All of them agreed that their life is maybe not ideal, there is still an improvement possible.

At this same place in Warangal I also had the opportunity to ask Padma a few questions. She is the housekeeper there, 16 years old, married since the age of 14, has one child, likes to have a second child and originally comes from a tribal village. To the question which life is better she answered that she liked to stay in the village because there she had all her people and further she liked the agriculture work. The best thing for her would be to go back and possess land and property after earning money in town during around one year. Her dream is to have lots of money and to own land. Padma considers herself as a poor person but nevertheless she thinks that she is better off than others because she has a few comforts, amenities and a regular income. She is also better off compared to her parents according to her. Padma expects that her children will have a better life because they will have the possibility to study whereas there is no choice to study in the villages at the moment.

On Saturday March 27, 2004 I had the opportunity to visit with Mr. Bharat Bhushan and Mr. A. Sujana a slum in Hyderabad and to conduct a few interviews with people living there. I talked to a group of about five women and one man. During the conversation we were sitting in the two-room building and were drinking coffee. At the same time I tried to find out what amenities they possess. I was quite surprised when I saw that they have a TV, a

radio with a cassette recorder, a cell phone, electricity, a fan, a clock, pictures, photos, a calendar, a newspaper and nice glasses and cups for the beverages. The house itself is made of massive walls with a roof of corrugated iron and lockable solid door. First they told me their situation and explained to me the main problems they have in this slum. Mrs. Pushpa Latha, 38 years old, and her family own the house we were in. Usually, most people only rent a house for about 500-600 Rupees a month. One room is the kitchen and the bedroom as well. The second room serves as a living room they share with other families. They have cooked with LP gas for one year, before that first with wood till 1999 and then with kerosene. There is a public tap where she has to collect the water from that runs every day for one hour. She and her husband have two sons that live with them at this place and one married daughter. The husband, who has been living there for the last 20 years, seasonally works as a painter under a labor contract for three to four month a year and also employs other workers. Their eldest son works for a newspaper in town and earns 600 Rupees a month. The second son who studied is unemployed at the moment. Further, she mentioned that her son in law worked in a TV shop. According to Mrs. Pushpa Latha, 5000-6000 Rupees per month are necessary (I guess for the family to live) and out of it 1600 Rupees a month are needed for the maintenance of her house. She considers her family not as very poor because they have a comparably good employment. Further, she explained to me the different types of employment people have in this slum. There are jobs with long term character as for instance the occupation her husband has or government jobs. Such employment is obviously valued most by her. People also work as daily wage labourers. This means that they go to a pick-up place where they offer their labour according to labour demand. There are also garbage collectors who do the worst job and even children do collect rubbish. Women usually work in the domestic service sector for example washing the laundry or cleaning the house. Mrs. Vijaya, 24 years old, does exactly this kind of job. She works in two houses as a housekeeper for a total amount of 900 Rupees a month. Her husband recently died. He had been occupied as a daily wage labourer before. The widow has to nourish three children two of them are in the school age. Usually, Mrs. Vijaya cooks only once a day on a kerosene stove and eats one meal in the employer`s house where she also gets the rest of the food to take home and clothes as well. There are also ration cards distributed by the government that allow poor people to buy subsidized lower quality food

for their families. Mrs. Vijaya owns one card. The small house (around 2x3m) they live in is rented for 500 Rupees a month. In that area the inhabitants share one toilet.

Main problems that exist in this slum are the drinking water contaminated by broken pipes of the drainage, water shortages in summer, insufficient drainage system, unemployment, high dropout rate of the children from school caused by child labour opportunities and expensiveness of skills education. Everybody wants to learn skills and work but there is no possibility. The inhabitants of this slum have created a self-help group to grant loans for education and health. Loans are given at an interest of 12% p.a.

After this introductory part I continued with my standard questions and got some interesting and well-differentiated answers. The question `What is poverty?` was answered in the opposite way namely what means to be rich. As in every discussion the answers were developed during the conversation. These women started with saying rich means having money and added also in a second step the element of enjoying prestige and being respected by the community. They supplemented further the term rich with nice housing conditions, amenities, transportation means and savings. That somebody is considered as rich it is a must to own a house and having a job is not a sufficient indicator of richness according to them. A family with more girls is supposed to be poorer because of the obligation to provide a marriage dowry. But on the other hand having more boys does not mean to be necessarily richer because the parents have to spend money for the boys` education. In the end, a family with more boys is only richer if the sons get a job and earn money. That is what they said. The interviewed group evaluates the different dimension in question as follows. Food is important. The rich people can afford three meals a day whereas poor persons have to be satisfied with less meals, less variety, less tasty, healthy and rich food. Health is considered to be an important precondition for work and earning bread, cooking and raising children but they also see in health a value in itself.⁶ Money without a good health condition is not worth much and there are also people with money but who have mental problems at the same time. Everybody is vulnerable to diseases but there is a difference where the poor and the rich go to for treatment. Rich people go to private hospitals where they get better care, powerful medicine and neat and clean rooms.

⁶ I think it is worth mentioning that this answer was not influenced by the form of the questions. I was quite surprised of this answer.

Poor people on the other hand go to a government hospital. I was also quite impressed about their differentiated perception and evaluation of education. They think that without education you could not do anything but with it you could get jobs and earn more for a better life. Education also gives power and allows better decisions, provides awareness and information. In the same way as they evaluate the other dimensions as really important they give much importance to the environment. But a good environment is also expensive and they do not have the choice to move to a better place with a better environment. Also the freedom to choose is considered by this group as very important for life. The greater choice has in their opinion the rich population. This class can choose their way of life. Freedom to choose is restricted by money, they think. Everywhere one has to have money but the life in villages seems to be better for them because it is cleaner there and more space is available. The rural life also makes people happier, the life is supposed to be easier, less stressful in a mental way and more secure in terms of unemployment risk. There the expenses are lower, and they spend less because everything is cheaper according to their perception.

All the opinions in these different interviews of Indian people determine the overall Indian societal definition and perception of poverty. I do not claim that this choice of interviews is completely representative but I would say that there are many valuable and useful hints in form of similarities and also differences.

In my opinion, the main point is the varying valuation of the dimensions concerning their purpose. The tribal people for instance reduce the term poverty to a one-dimensional situation of having not enough food, where a sufficient nutrition is their single end and all other dimensions are considered only as means. The `richer` on the contrary include more dimensions as ends and not only as means. This seems quite plausible and can also be justified by the theory of Maslow.⁷ According to his `pyramid of needs`, basic needs like food and shelter have to be satisfied (at least to a certain degree), before higher preferences like security and further self-realization can become important and a driving, motivating force for a person. People like tribes that still live a more primitive life than the high society first have to look after their fulfillment of basic needs before other preferences can be

⁷ For a short review of Maslow's theory visit for example the following internet site: <http://web.utk.edu/~gwynne/maslow.HTM>, 10.5.2004.

satisfied. In the interview led in the slum the women explained that health was not only a means but also an end in itself. Compared to the tribes the interviewed women in the slum lead a more developed life with more amenities and comfort in a more progressive society.⁸ In Europe for instance, the people value the different dimensions like health, education, environment, social circumstances etc. not only as a means for a given end, but also strongly as ends in themselves. Therefore, I would conclude that the more developed a society is, the sooner this society values such different dimensions also as ends.

The term freedom to choose is obviously a quite confusing notion. The answers I got are rather limited. There were also disparities in understanding on the part of the academics. Apparently, freedom and choice are interrelated and have to be considered together. Freedom to choose is not much worth without having choice and even choice can have different values depending on the quality and quantity of the choice set – the set of alternatives or opportunities. Although the interviews do not deliver much information about the evaluation of freedom there are partly certain hints that indicate a high value. Regardless, I am convinced that freedom to choose has a big value for all societies. Therefore, I argue that for development measures it is really important to let the persons concerned participate in planning so they can choose. Choosing through participation also guarantees acceptance.

The question of what life is better was answered on the one hand in the expected way on the other hand concerning the tribes in a surprising way. The initial motivation for this question was whether the tribes see an incentive in going to the cities or not. I would have expected that because of the opulence they prefer to move to a city rather than doing agriculture work in rural areas. Indeed there exists a migration from villages to cities: „The fact that there is net migration from the villages to cities shows the disparities in living standards between the two. Ideally, both rural and urban areas should be equally attractive with no net migration either way.” (Abdul Kalam 2002: 128). But the answers I got are not so surprising from another perspective. I would say it is obvious that many people appreciate the site where they grew up and spent most of their lifetime. They like the place where they have their roots. Yet the interviewed inhabitants of the slum would prefer to live

⁸ This statement is obviously considerable normative. It raises the question what a more developed life defines.

in the village. They see some advantages in the life there especially the more available space there. For me it seems that because of the more developed life in this slum people there are able to fulfill their basic needs to a higher degree than the interviewed tribes. As a consequence this allows them to think about higher preferences like happiness etc. Such preferences would probably have been more fulfilled in rural areas. But in my opinion the slum inhabitants overestimate or do not consider the (lower) fulfillment of basic needs in villages which is a precondition to think about higher preferences.

In many of the interviews it is obvious that an improvement in the living conditions between the former and the actual generation took place. There are also optimistic attitudes concerning the future development especially due to the expected power of education.

4. A brief comparison of the tribal life and the life in urban slums: poverty in rural and urban areas

Part three has examined the different perceptions of poverty which allows us to establish a list of different dimensions constituting well-being. In accordance with the Capability Approach, poverty would therefore be a lack of having opportunities to generate well-being. The focus is no longer on (one) means (namely money) but on different valuable ends which can of course be achieved by various means – poverty is not a one-dimensional phenomenon anymore but a multidimensional deprivation. The dimensions expressed by functionings respectively capabilities, as well as their indicators can differ from culture to culture and from society to society. They have to be adjusted to the given context. But many dimensions would probably be similar regardless to the society. Only the evaluation and importance of the different dimensions can vary. Some people as we have seen in chapter three value certain functionings more as a goal or end rather than as a means and vice versa. The main purpose of this part is to provide an idea of a kind of checklist on which a poverty analysis of the tribal situation and the conditions in slums based on the Capability Approach and in accordance with the Indian understanding of poverty can be made. This analysis represents in a first step the conceptual idea and gives in a second way information about where disparities exist. The comparison itself should not be considered as complete and fully scientifically proven, more these are my observations, interpretations

and ideas. Although the emphasis lies on the methodology, the comparison hopefully makes possible a more differentiated picture of the two forms of poverty.

Before starting with the comparison itself it seems to be appropriate to give a short definition of tribes and slums based on my experiences, observations and information.

Tribes are indigenous people that originally live in rural areas. Their life is strongly based on peculiar traditional elements and appears to be considerably disconnected from our life in our globalized world. The major occupation is agricultural work in the first place for self-supply.

In Hyderabad it seems that there exist two different sorts of slums: the notified and the unnotified slums. The former defines a settlement that is recognized by the government and also officially supported by providing basic infrastructure like water supply, toilets, drainages and houses. The latter refers to an illegal gathering of mobile basic shelter and infrastructure in form of wooden huts etc.

As the title of this chapter says I equate the tribal life with rural poverty and the slums with urban poverty. Of course, this is a dangerous generalization since poverty has various facets and can concern all groups of people.

Now it is time to create a possible list that constitutes individual well-being from which poverty can be derived.⁹ To avoid the difficulty of measuring capabilities I stick to actually realized functionings but incorporate sometimes certain indicators that describe capabilities in terms of access to something. This renunciation of capabilities as a compromise to the practical application is possibly not as problematic as feared. One can probably assume that basic needs such as eating are chosen to be fulfilled if the situation makes it possible. Cases where people choose not to eat are rare, I would guess. But it is still important to have always in mind the possible discrepancy between realization and opportunity respectively functioning and capability. The following list shows the important dimensions, the related functionings or goals and their broad indicators that have to be described in more detail in a

⁹ For further information and ideas about how to implement Sen's Capability Approach see for example Chiappero Martinetti (2000), Comim (2001), Fusco (2003), Lelli (without year) and Saith (2001).

next step. Remember the analysis is primarily related to single individuals. Afterwards aggregations are possible, of course.

Table 1: Dimensions, functionings and indicators of well-being

Dimension	<i>Functioning/Goal</i>	Indicator
Food	<i>Having enough (well-balanced healthy) food</i>	Body mass index
Health	<i>Being in a physically and mentally good health</i>	Presence or absence of certain diseases and handicaps, access to medical treatments, happiness
Shelter and infrastructure	<i>Having an adequate living standard</i>	Availability of certain amenities
Education and knowledge	<i>Being adequately educated</i>	Degree of school, profession etc., access to school
Social and environmental conditions	<i>Living in socially and environmentally adequate circumstances</i>	Happiness with relation- and friendships, working situation, state of the environment (pollution)
Economical condition	<i>Having enough financial resources</i>	Amount of money and other opulence available

Source: Own representation.

Food seems to be the most valued dimension of well-being by the Indian society and a lack of food therefore defines mainly poverty here. The related functioning expresses the goal of having enough and well-balanced healthy food. To which extent the goal is fulfilled can probably be measured best by the body mass index which relates the body weight with the height. But the component of well-balanced healthy food is not included by this indicator. I think this aspect can be better incorporated by the second dimension of health. There, good physical and mental health is the end. It can be measured by a list of different diseases and handicaps of various severities. Such a list can include for example Malaria, AIDS, Polio,

Japanese Encephalitis etc. Also the opportunity to go to a doctors place or a hospital should be considered. It reflects more a capability because it emphasizes the freedom to choose, namely to go or not to go for diagnosis and treatment. Happiness represents at least partly the mental state of a person. As an indicator the use of simple questions like `Are you happy and content?` can provide information. Shelter and infrastructure as a dimension show the living standard. What kind of accommodation do people have? Is it a own house, an apartment, a hut or a place without roof? And what amenities are available? Is there drinking water, electricity, a phone, a TV, a bed per person, a stove, transport mediums etc. available? There are many other things to think about. What kind of indicator should be chosen is a question of society and their overall level of development. This is especially in this dimension quite obvious. Education and knowledge can be measured by the degree of education, for instance by distinguishing between no education, primary education, secondary or third education. Also the access to education by considering the access to school can be a valuable indicator. A human being also has social needs. Communication, friendships and relationships are important for them. There are plenty of indicators to think about. And environmental conditions as well influence or constitute the well-being of people. Here the air, the water and the soil should be considered. Economic resources are mainly a means to reach a valuable end. But meanwhile, especially in Europe, having enough economic resources is also valued as an end in itself. But of course, I have to admit, that this is still more an issue of instrumentality instead of purpose in my opinion. Anyway, in a world of exchange and globalization money has an important role not only as a means to pay that hardly can be neglected in matters of well-being, poverty and development in the light of the capability context.

It is apparent that all these dimensions cannot be considered in an isolated way. There exist considerable interdependencies. For instance, it is quite likely that a bad health condition influences the stock of economic resources, and this can as a consequence have impacts on the housing condition etc. In summary, certain functionings can themselves serve as a means to reach other functionings. This is not necessarily in contradiction with the fact that functionings constitute ends in themselves – concentration on ends instead of means for defining well-being. The operation that functionings perform, can be either as an end or a

means but people`s valuation of functionings is mainly as an end in itself. In accordance with the results given by the different interviews in section three we can say that well-being and poverty is chiefly related to the food dimension. Other dimensions do not play the same role as food does. The above list therefore could be reduced to the single dimension of food. But in my understanding and from a development perspective it is better to include other dimensions presented by functionings that will get value with an improved life situation in the future – this again seen in the light of Maslow`s theory. A next step could be an investigation of how Indian people really value the different elements of well-being in quantitative terms. As I have already mentioned this requires sophisticated methods of evaluation and aggregation. Such steps again include normative statements in the form of judgements comparing different life situations to get a societal evaluation of the functionings` importance. Furthermore, the different values of the indicators and dimensions can then be aggregated to an overall value of individual and in a further aggregation step of societal well-being. In this paper I do without it for mainly two reasons. First of all, I do not have the time to study and research this topic in more detail. This task is indeed demanding in every sense because of its complexity: sophisticated methods are important and people`s participation is a must – all that takes much time. However, the lack of a detailed quantitative evaluation and aggregation does not affect the purpose of such a checklist and comparison because every chosen dimension influences the most valued one to a certain extent – and we already know this is the food. Hence, it is first of all more important to know the interdependencies in more detail in order to improve the main goal, the reduction of food insecurity, instead of knowing more about the various evaluation of the other dimensions in question. Anyway, the more developed the life the more valued the other aspects of well-being become. It is also possible to define a poverty line or range after the aggregation of the values of the well-being dimensions. I will not do this here because of the same reasons already mentioned.

Based on the previous list and my observations I finally compare briefly and generally the life situation in the tribal villages in Medak District and slums in Hyderabad.

To be able to make a statement concerning the food situation it is necessary to have the body mass index of every person and ideally at different seasons in the year. I do not have

access to such information. But I would say that there are people in the villages – especially women – that seem to be quite well-nourished from the energetic point of view.

Concerning health different diseases that appear seasonally like Malaria and Japanese Encephalitis are still a big problem both in villages and slums. Slum inhabitants suffer moreover from respiratory diseases caused by the heavy pollution in town according to a statement of a doctor at the private one-man hospital Zikra in the slum area at Sri Ram Nagar Colony in Hyderabad. Problems in access to medical treatment seem to be severe at both places. But in slum areas the physical distance at least is obviously smaller than in villages on average. The main problem is probably the payment of such treatments.

Houses in villages are considerably primitive although the standard varies from house to house. You can find houses with thatched roofs and others with solid walls and roofs. Problematic is that the cattle live just next door to their houses causing unhygienic situations what increase the risk of diseases. Toilets are not available everywhere and therefore a clean and safe separation of wasted water and clean water is not provided. Drinking water is available at public taps and the source is mainly the ground water. The quality of water has to be examined more deeply. I guess that it is still quite bad and unhealthy although there are some UNICEF projects that provided pipes and reservoirs. Electricity is available at some places. Cooking has still to be done on fire. I would say that in villages you can find less well-developed facilities than in notified slums although even there gaps are quite big. Worst seem to be unnotified slums in this sense because of probably less help from the government side. Property rights concerning land do not exist at all in unnotified slums whereas in notified ones and in villages they are better defined but likely still vulnerable to governmental power etc. for example in form of (forced) resettlements.¹⁰ Land prices are higher in town than in the countryside. Furthermore, I would say that slums are generally more crowded than villages also bearing a health risk.

It is also difficult to make clear statements about the education. In villages there are certain schools provided by the government or NGOs. In terms of access determined by distance slums are probably better off (closer to facilities), but still the financial burden for education remains in both places.

¹⁰ For further information about resettlements in villages see for example Bandyopadhyay (2004).

Both tribal people and slum inhabitants are not really part of the Indian society I would say even though there are efforts to develop and integrate these people. The working situation is difficult in both areas but all in all probably a little bit better in towns. There are strong dependencies on employers and on the government (as an employer or buyer of products). From an environmental perspective the countryside is definitely better in my opinion because of less pollution and more space and availability of natural resources as well.

The economic dimension is on the one side determined by the earnings and the endowments and on the other side by the expenses. Both sides are probably higher in urban areas but in the end it depends mainly on the possibility of getting a job or not.

These statements are based on my own observations and information I received. I am completely aware that some statements and conclusions are vague. But the main aim is to show how the idea of the functionings and capabilities can be implemented. A more extensive comparison is required to judge where the life is `better` and who is poorer.

5. Conclusion and suggestions

In the preceding chapters we have had a short summary of Sen`s Capability Approach, the Indian understanding of poverty and an example of how to implement parts of Sen`s idea by comparing briefly the situation in slums and tribal villages.

Functionings represent the state of a person to do or to be something, whereas capabilities stand for the ability to achieve the functionings given external and internal circumstances. His approach therefore concentrates on the ends rather than means as many other approaches to determine well-being or poverty respectively do. The capabilities emphasize the notion and value of freedom to choose.

Interviews with different members of the Indian society show that poverty is strongly related to having not enough food and therefore is reduced to this dimension only. Surprisingly, money does not play the main role in their poverty definition. Other dimensions like shelter, health and education are mostly valued more as means than as ends in themselves as this is the phenomenon of most western countries. I have tried to explain this result with the theory of Maslow. The brief comparison of the situation in the slums of Hyderabad and tribal life in the Medak District demonstrates the following results: It is

difficult to say which life is better from a well-being perspective because I do not have sufficiently detailed information for a convincing comparison and because I did not aggregate. But anyway, in some dimensions the rural areas are better off, in other dimensions the urban regions.

In the long term, to overcome poverty and to develop people's living conditions it is necessary to increase and provide individual capabilities. This means that basis has to be built to make it possible for people to achieve desired goals – realize certain functionings – by providing means. The forms of doing so and the necessary amount of means are as manifold as diverse people are. But there are of course more preferable means and dimensions where immediate action is required and where a reinforcing effect is to be expected. I am thinking of education apart from relief of essential problems interfering in the fulfillment of basic needs. Providing access to a good education and creating awareness of how important it is, influences the existing interdependencies through other dimensions as well. Education works as a help to self-help which is really important in my opinion from an efficient as well as sustainable point of view. There are also other factors that have impact on different capabilities. I distinguish between hard and soft factors. Hard factors I would describe as more or less visible and obvious ones like for instance environmental circumstances or biological facts. You can think of the climate or diseases. Soft factors on the contrary are less concrete and comprehensible. The society or the individual themselves are the source of such soft factors. Culture, tradition and religion for example are such ones and exhibit influences and affections on capabilities by inhering certain values. To this category I mainly assign therefore sociological, psychological, religious and cultural facts. It is this class I think we have to investigate in more detail to find out why India as a nation does not perform as well as others. I think the following statement also indirectly points to this direction: „Since the last fifty years, India has been a developing country. It means economically it is not strong, socially it is not stable, in security aspects it is not selfreliant, and that is why it is called a developing country.“ (Abdul Kalam 2002: 74). At this point I would like to take the opportunity to express my opinion concerning this. During my stay here in Hyderabad I experienced and observed a lot – India and its population is quite different in many ways to Switzerland and its people. The Indian culture and the value

system seem to be far away from the Swiss one. And I recognized some elements I like and some I do not like and that could also be responsible for the India`s low performance in my opinion. I am aware that it is dangerous to make such generalizing statements that as a consequence limit to judgements. But I do it with a good intention namely to give to the Indian society a different perspective – a perspective from outside – in order to learn. I really appreciate how the different religions here in India can live together without interfering each other. Another impressive fact is that I have almost never seen aggression here in this country. And the most people I have met are friendly and open-hearted. These elements are good and really important for an overall high performance. But the religion of Hinduism with its caste system obviously causes discrimination among the society. By being put on different levels injustice can flourish and provoke inequality. An unequal basis increases inequality through the various human activities, above all the economic activity. Therefore, disparities rise as well. Gender discrimination appears to be still common in India whereas European countries perform better in this context. It inhibits the potential women could contribute to society and to a more developed life apart from the ideal and claim itself of women and men having equal rights and duties. Time in my opinion is valued considerably low in India, cheating (at least foreigners) is widespread, talking people into buying something often happens and also saying something but not doing it frequently occurs. These are all elements that disturb trust and trust is an essential precondition for trade and economic activities in general. The latter usually and hopefully produces wealth in form of added value and wealth again is a means of several for well-being. To me it seems that such values affect the Indian standard to a big extent since India is a really abundant country. Even if there were not much natural resources the country could anyway perform well. Look at Switzerland! What natural resources does it have? Not much: There is water, salt and stones, but nevertheless it developed during the last century

to o vggre(s)24(op)-2862(,)-10()-0TJ -257(du)-20.003e w3r

mentioned earlier I strongly believe in education although its fruits only grow slowly with the time. Improvements are therefore not apparent immediately but in the long-term perspective efficient and sustainable.

So, India, you have the potential to change. The only obstacle is to overcome the collective action problem you are facing. The change starts in every individual mind, have a common vision and dream as Abdul Kalam (2002) says!

„That is something addressed to all of us. It is the people of a nation who make it great. By their effort, the people in turn become important citizens of their great country. Ignited minds are the most powerful resource on earth, and the one billion minds of our nation are indeed a great power waiting to be tapped.“ (Abdul Kalam 2002:137).

At this point I like to take the opportunity to say thank you to the CARPED staff who made it possible to get a valuable overview of the different issues in poverty, development and also of the Indian culture. I am also grateful to the AIESEC members that organized this traineeship and the pleasant stay here in Hyderabad.

6. References

- Abdul Kalam, Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen. 2002. *Ignited minds. Unleashing the power within India*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.
- Alkire, Sabina. 2002. *Valuing Freedoms. Sen's Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bandyopadhyay, D. 2004. „Rayagada Story Retold. Destitutes of Development.“ *Economic and Political Weekly* January 31, 2004, pp. 408-411.
- Chiappero Martinetti, Enrica. 2000. „A multidimensional assessment of well-being based on Sen's Functioning Approach.“ Forthcoming in *Rivista Internazionale di Scienza Sociali* 2, 2000. <http://www.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/vhi/sen/papers/martinet.pdf>, 30.9.2003.

- Comim, Flavio. 2001. „Operationalizing Sen’s Capability Approach.“ <http://www.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/vhi/sen/papers/comim.pdf>, 25.9.2003.
- Fusco, Alessio. 2003. „On the definition and measurement of poverty: The contribution of multidimensional analysis.“ <http://cfs.unipv.it/sen/papers/Fusco.pdf>, 6.11.2003.
- Lelli, Sara. Without year. „Factor Analysis vs. Fuzzy Sets Theory: Assessing the Influence of Different Techniques on Sen’s Functioning Approach.” Preliminary. <http://www.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/vhi/sen/papers/lelli.pdf>, 30.9.2003.
- Muellbauer, John. 1987. „Professor Sen on the Standard of Living.” In: Hawthorn, Geoffrey (Ed.). *The Standard of Living*. The Tanner Lectures. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 39-58.
- Nussbaum, Martha. 2000. *Women and Human Development. The Capabilities Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Saith, Ruhi. 2001. „Capabilities: the Concept and its Operationalisation.“ *Queen Elizabeth House Working Paper Series*, Working Paper Number 66 (QEHWPS66). <http://www2.qeh.ox.ac.uk/pdf/qehwp/qehwps66.pdf>, 25.9.2003.
- Sen, Amartya. 1982. *Choice, Welfare and Measurement*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Sen, Amartya. 1984. *Resources, Values and Development*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Sen, Amartya. 1985. *Commodities and Capabilities*. Professor Dr. P. Hennipman Lectures in Economics Volume 7. Amsterdam: North Holland.
- Sen, Amartya. 1987. „The Standard of Living: Lecture II, Lives and Capabilities.” In: Hawthorn, Geoffrey (Ed.). *The Standard of Living*. The Tanner Lectures. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 20-38.
- Sen, Amartya. 1993. „Capability and Well-Being.” In: Nussbaum, Martha and Amartya Sen (Eds.). *The Quality of Life*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 30-53.
- Sen, Amartya. 1995. *Inequality reexamined*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sen, Amartya. 1997. *On Economic Inequality*. Enlarged edition with a substantial annexe ‘On Economic Inequality after a Quarter Century’. James Foster and Amartya Sen. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Sen, Amartya. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.