



**Voice, Agency and Participation**  
**Consultation at Conference of the Human Development and Capabilities Association,**  
**Managua, Nicaragua September 2013**

Emma Samman, Overseas Development Institute, presented the report and solicited feedback (at a pre-conference consultation), and presented a summary of the new empirical work for the report. Both of the presentations were very well attended, with around 20 and 25 participants, mainly from universities and research institutions.

On the consultation, the key comments and suggestions were as follows:

Sabina Alkire comments:

- Recommendation to focus on what is common to the five expressions – e.g., to stress their intrinsic value as well as their instrumental value
- GBV is a powerful focus but questions around the conceptual value of family formation – Does this have intrinsic value or is it more instrumental?
- Suggestion to stress that our suggestion of domains of agency is non-exhaustive
- DATA – we have two options. One is to make specific recommendations (e.g., Relative Autonomy Index), another is to point to all the data that is missing and make it a call for better data. Suggestion that we bring to a sharp point the call for better data by highlighting the low cost of collecting what is needed/data at an intrahousehold level (we might for example look at the costs of collecting the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index)

Other comments:

- In terms of freedom of movement and migration – need to be more clear on focus, is it women who migrate and/or also those who are left behind when men migrate and the effect that this has on their lives.
- Suggestion to consider impact of migration on child care.
- Intersectionality – this should be a strong focus – can we look in greater detail at the Tanzanian costing study of GBV and identify the costs for particular subgroups of the population?
- Recommendation to integrate five ‘expressions’ by discussing not only how they interact with one another but also how they interact with ‘traditional’ dimensions such as education and labor force participation
- One value of the perceptions data is to suggest who would take up opportunities if they could – what are ingredients in different settings that could work?
- Recommendation to disaggregate as much as possible the WVS data (and look at the components of gender inequality in each region, as the HDR does) to the extent the data permit
- Concern over the use of the term ‘expression’ – that this overlooks the macro-level structural aspects of the issues we are addressing.
- Suggestion that the word ‘expressions’ is not very meaningful – and that we consider ‘supports’ or ‘enablers’ of agency and agency as ‘metacapability to use other capabilities’
- Highlight quality of work issues in addition to labor force participation
- What about family formation in developed countries – ought to highlight, including abortion laws and their effects on wellbeing

- Stress importance of life cycle approach – e.g., female participation may be high at a university level but what happens later?
- Suggestion to focus on the ‘negative impacts of empowerment’ on families – e.g., to highlight tensions that can arise from greater participation of women in workforce etc.
- Quite a lot of concern was expressed that we are ‘imposing choices’ particularly in our focus on changing social norms and values. Suggestion that we make clear we are offering possibilities for change not imposing our values (e.g., policies create capabilities, which people are free to use or abstain from) and that we be clear about how we are choosing ‘expressions’ – are we choosing things that people value or imposing our values?
- Suggestion that we address clearly how we are approaching issue of adaptive preference.
- On control over property – be clear about what we are aiming to capture that goes beyond the intra-household allocation of resources.
- Several recommendations to explain fully the conceptual foundations of capability