

**ANALYZING SOCIAL CAPITAL IN CONTEXT**

*A Guide to Using Qualitative Methods and Data*

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and Michael Woolcock*

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## Foreword

Social capital, defined most practically as social networks and norms, mediates development opportunities and outcomes. As such, social capital research increasingly informs the design and evaluation of World Bank-supported projects and policies across diverse regions and countries, from Albania, Guatemala, and Indonesia to Nigeria, India, and the Kyrgyz Republic. While robust conclusions regarding correlations between development impacts and social capital can be gained through quantitative research alone, this is far from an ideal approach. Because social capital exists between individuals and groups, it is preferable to employ some qualitative and participatory methods to understand the causes and nuances of relationships and the contexts within which they exist.

This companion piece to an earlier paper on quantitative approaches to measuring social capital (Grootaert et al. 2004) assists researchers and development task managers in their efforts to better understand and incorporate the social sphere into their work. This document offers a set of qualitative tools and strategies that are useful for gauging the nature and extent of people's interactions with each other and with key private, public, and civic institutions. Anticipating the time constraints of task managers, researchers, and respondents, this guide offers a select, field-tested group of tools and questions for data collection.

Integrating quantitative and qualitative methods in social science research can yield better results by minimizing single-method biases and triangulating findings. While acknowledging that such integration is not always possible in practice, this guide helps researchers understand the relative strengths and weaknesses of each method. The guide can be used to generate stand-alone findings or incorporated into preparations for quantitative survey instruments. With proper adaptation, it can help apply social capital research to almost any context. In addition, the guide demonstrates how social capital research can have practical implications for projects and policies that ultimately improve people's lives. As such, it is the next rather than final step in attempts to refine our understanding of local social contexts and improve our collective capacity to respond to the voices of poor people.

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The views expressed in this document are those of the authors alone and should not be attributed to the World Bank, its executive directors, or the countries that they represent.

## Abstract

This document is a companion piece to an earlier paper on quantitative approaches to measuring social capital (Grootaert et al. 2004). It provides a complementary set of qualitative tools and strategies for gauging the nature and extent of people's interactions with each other and with key private, public, and civic institutions. Although designed primarily for developing countries, these tools may also be applied in developed countries. This guide can help generate stand-alone findings or background information for a context-specific survey instrument. In either case, researchers should adapt the guide to the local context and the particular research questions they seek to answer. It should be noted that the guide assumes a basic level of familiarity and experience with key social science research procedures.

It is usually best to integrate quantitative and qualitative methods in social science research, especially when investigating social capital. Because this is not always possible in practice, it is all the more important that researchers understand the relative strengths and weaknesses of each method. To help researchers understand these trade-offs, this guide briefly:

- explains the value of an integrated approach to social capital research, highlighting participatory and other qualitative techniques;
- demonstrates how social capital research can have practical implications for projects and policies that, in turn, can lead to better development outcomes;
- offers specific guidance on how to apply qualitative methods to understanding six dimensions of social capital;
- highlights potential pitfalls of qualitative tools, based on actual field experience;
- identifies additional resources on qualitative approaches that can help researchers fine-tune research methods; and
- encourages task managers and their country counterparts to engage in the design of social capital research.

# Introduction

This document\* endeavors to assist development practitioners and operational staff in their efforts to understand the nature, extent, and importance of social relations, or social capital,<sup>1</sup> in the communities in which they work. The ultimate goal of this guide is to involve development professionals—especially country teams, task managers, and senior officials of the countries in which they work—in the design and use of social capital research. Social relations are a powerful resource with which poor people craft survival and mobility strategies. They lie at the heart of processes that shape and sustain identities, interests, aspirations, values, priorities, and perceptions.

The companion document to this guide—*Measuring Social Capital: An Integrated Questionnaire* (Grootaert et al. 2004)—uses quantitative methods to explore how such influences impact development, using a comprehensive questionnaire that can be incorporated into household survey instruments such as the Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS). This paper addresses similar issues from a qualitative standpoint; together, the two documents provide an integrated package for measuring and analyzing social capital. While using a single approach may be necessary in some circumstances, a judicious combination of methods increases the analytical richness of a study and provides a sounder empirical basis for making policy and project recommendations.

This document provides concrete suggestions for using qualitative methods to explore six sometimes overlapping dimensions of social capital:<sup>2</sup> (i) groups and networks, (ii) trust and solidarity, (iii) collective action and cooperation, (iv) information and communication, (v) social cohesion and inclusion, and (vi) empowerment and political action. These dimensions reflect two different ways of thinking about social capital. The first focuses on how social relationships act as a means through which individuals, households, or small groups secure (or are denied) access to resources.<sup>3</sup> From this standpoint, individuals, households, or small groups who have access to important resources, or who occupy key strategic positions in a network, are said to have “more” social capital than others, because their social relationships and position in these networks give them better access to and control over valued resources. Implicit in this approach is the recognition that the distribution of social capital within any given community is unequal and often stratified, meaning that social capital can function as a mechanism of exclusion as well as inclusion. Resources themselves, of course, can be used for a variety of constructive or destructive purposes.

A different way of thinking about social capital takes the community as the unit of analysis, focusing on the nature and extent of cross-cutting ties, together with people’s involvement in informal networks and formal civic organizations.<sup>4</sup> This approach focuses on the ways in which

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed conceptual overview of the social capital literature (and the various debates within it) is provided in the earlier companion document (Grootaert et al. 2004).

<sup>2</sup> To allow for easy merging of the quantitative and qualitative research approaches, these are the same six dimensions used in Grootaert et al. (2004).

<sup>3</sup> This approach is often associated with sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.

<sup>4</sup> This approach is more closely associated with political scientist Robert Putnam.

community members interact and collaborate, particularly on issues of shared concern. Because this model identifies social capital as an indicator, or prerequisite, of civic capacity, it pays particular attention to the role of state and legal institutions in facilitating or undermining civic involvement.<sup>5</sup>

The model of social capital used in this guide integrates these approaches. It examines how different types of networks help and/or hinder access to key resources (including public services) and how participation in different types of community groups shapes the capacity for collective action. Like its quantitative counterpart, the guide also draws on practical lessons identified in previous research by the World Bank and other development institutions. Whether using quantitative, qualitative, or integrated methods, the most important lesson of social capital research to date is that adequate time and resources must be invested in adapting a proposed framework to the specific research needs and local context of a given research project. The tools presented in this document are best suited to understanding the dynamics of social capital within communities and assessing how its various dimensions change over time. (Given adequate preparation, however, these tools can also be used to compare results across communities).

## **Qualitative Methods that Contribute to the Study of Social Capital**

Most social science researchers acknowledge the importance of using a range of methods to assess given phenomena. In practice, however, the distinctive skill sets associated with each approach, plus limited time and resources, mean that only one approach tends to be adopted for a specific study. This practice is especially unfortunate in development, since the issues under investigation are typically very complex. In order to adequately understand development issues and establish a firm basis on which to draw project and policy recommendations, data that offers both context-specific “depth” (usually obtained via qualitative methods) and generalizable “breadth” (usually obtained via quantitative methods) is required (Bamberger 2000; Rao and Woolcock 2003).

“Social capital” is one such complex issue that benefits from the coherent integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Researchers in the field are thus encouraged to adopt the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods that best correspond to the specific nature of the issues under investigation. While strongly supportive of integrated research methods, this guide focuses specifically on qualitative approaches.

### **Comparative advantage of qualitative and quantitative approaches**

The case for qualitative research rests on the unique and important insights that it brings in its own right and, secondarily, on its capacity to address the weaknesses of quantitative approaches. Indeed, the respective strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative approaches are largely complementary—that is, the weaknesses of one approach can be compensated for by the strengths of the other.

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<sup>5</sup> Whether social capital is an indicator of or a prerequisite to civic capacity is a key conceptual debate in the social capital literature (see Woolcock 2003).



*Quantitative methods* characteristically refer to standardized questionnaires that are administered to individuals or households, which are identified through various forms of sampling (usually random sampling). Sampling allows the results to be considered representative, comparable, and generalizable to a wider population. Given a set of identifying conditions, quantitative data can help establish correlations between given variables and outcomes. Such data should allow others to validate original findings by independently replicating the analysis. By remaining several steps removed from the individuals from whom the data is obtained, and by collecting and analyzing the data in numerical form, quantitative methods are intended to uphold empirically rigorous, impartial, and objective research standards.

The strengths of quantitative research can, however, also be weaknesses. Many important characteristics of people and communities (both rich and poor)—for example, identities, perceptions, and beliefs—cannot be meaningfully reduced to numbers or adequately understood without reference to the local context in which people live. In addition, most surveys are designed far from the places where they will be administered and thus tend to reflect the preconceptions and biases of the researcher. Because “outsiders” (i.e., foreign researchers) set the parameters of research, they are unlikely to be exposed to new discoveries and/or unexpected findings. Although good surveys undergo several rounds of rigorous pre-testing, the questions used in such surveys are not usually developed on the basis of insights from the field. Thus, while pre-testing can identify and correct questions that are clearly ill suited to a given research objective, the limitations of context remain. These limitations can be mitigated by qualitative methods that incorporate insights from the field and leave room for unexpected findings.

Effective quantitative research usually requires a large sample size (sometimes several thousand households). However, lack of resources sometimes makes large-scale research of this kind impossible. In many settings—particularly developing countries—interested parties (e.g., governments, nongovernmental organizations, public service providers) may lack the skills and especially the resources needed to conduct a thorough quantitative evaluation. In such cases, qualitative methods can be used with smaller samples to provide insights into a development question. Alternatively, interested parties might engage external researchers with little or no familiarity with a country (let alone a region or municipality) to analyze data from context-specific household surveys. Although such efforts may yield broad policy recommendations, they rarely provide results that are useful to local program officials or project beneficiaries. Qualitative research can provide a context for such quantitative findings, making them more relevant and specific.

*Qualitative methods* typically refer to a range of data collection and analysis techniques that use purposive sampling and semi-structured, open-ended interviews. These techniques, which both produce and analyze textual data, allow for more in-depth analysis of social, political, and economic processes (Krishna and Shrader 2000, Hentschel 1999).

Qualitative methods both value and incorporate experiential knowledge into the analysis of development successes and failures. Studying poverty and other issues from the outside tends to favor technical expertise, which may or may not include an appreciation of the context of various local situations. As Chambers (1997, 32) points out, “power hinders learning.” Qualitative methods and open-ended responses tilt the balance of power and expertise away from the researcher toward respondents and community members. Such methods are vital for examining

complex issues of causality, process, and context. Open-ended questioning and focus group discussions are, in fact, designed to allow respondents to identify and articulate their priorities and concerns free from researchers' restrictions and assumptions.

One issue of qualitative research is the question of whose voice is being heard, and amplified, by the research (Narayan 1995, Chambers 1997, Estrella and Gaventa 1997). Exploring issues from the perspective of different groups thus becomes important. Various groups within a community may have overlapping or very different experiences of social norms and networks. Qualitative methods that allow researchers to explore the views of homogenous as well as diverse groups of people help unpack these differing perspectives within a community. Because social capital is relational—it exists between people—asking a group of people to respond together to certain questions and hypothetical situations may yield information that is more nuanced than data derived from surveys.

Qualitative methods such as focus groups, institution mapping, and priority rankings are particularly suitable for social capital research because social capital comes into play and can be observed during these exercises. In some cases, social capital can even be used and enhanced through focus group work.<sup>6</sup> The processes involved in qualitative data collection and analysis can also build shared ownership of research and its results between researchers and the community, which ceases to be simply the subject or respondent, but a driver of the process.

In circumstances where a quantitative survey may be difficult to administer, qualitative methods can also be useful. Certain marginalized communities are small in number (e.g., the disabled, widows) or difficult for outsiders to access (e.g., sex workers, victims of domestic abuse), meaning that their views and experiences are unlikely to be captured in a survey based on random sampling. In situations where governments are highly suspicious of quantitative surveys, qualitative work may be the only research option available for assessing social capital issues. And although small samples are more frequent in qualitative research, it is possible to conduct larger-scale, cross-country qualitative research (see Narayan and Shah 1999).

Just as quantitative approaches have their limitations, so, too, do qualitative methods. Because the samples tend to be small and not selected randomly, it is relatively more difficult to extrapolate qualitative findings to the wider population. Second, because groups may be selected in an idiosyncratic manner (e.g., by decision of the lead investigator) or on the recommendation of other participants (as in “snowball” sampling procedures, in which one respondent agrees to provide access to another respondent), it can be difficult to replicate, and thus independently verify, the results of qualitative research.

Third, analysis of qualitative data demands interpretation of the research, and two researchers looking at the same data may arrive at somewhat different conclusions.<sup>7</sup> Fourth, because qualitative data cannot control for other mitigating factors or establish the counterfactual, it is hard (but again, not impossible) to make compelling claims regarding causality on the basis of

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<sup>6</sup> Any situation that has the possibility to build social capital also has the potential to break it down (i.e., if people have a negative social experience). Researchers can guard against this danger by carefully designing the situations in which qualitative research takes place in collaboration with people who know the local context.

<sup>7</sup> Quantitative methods are relatively less prone to subjective interpretation, but they are certainly not free of this problem.

qualitative data alone.<sup>8</sup> Using quantitative approaches can compensate for some of these weaknesses; others simply require researchers to acknowledge the limits of the research design and make a good-faith effort to minimize them.

To conclude, the limitations of both qualitative methods and quantitative methods are mitigated by triangulation (see the later subsection on this topic). In the same way that quantitative data benefits from comparisons with qualitative data, it is vital that qualitative data be cross-checked against quantitative findings.

### **Integrating qualitative and quantitative methods in operational work**

Social capital is multi-dimensional in nature. Given that it is most frequently defined in terms of groups, networks, norms, and trust, research on social capital must be able to capture this multi-dimensionality. As a topic, then, social capital lends itself to a mixed-methods research approach. Employing both qualitative and quantitative methods allows researchers to uncover the links between different dimensions of social capital and poverty, as well as to construct a more comprehensive picture of the structures and perceptions of social capital.

Even if quantitative and qualitative approaches are construed as existing along a continuum (Bamberger 2000), rather than being wholly distinctive, the fact remains that most individual researchers are trained primarily in only one approach. The organizational imperatives of development research also tend to give higher priority to one approach (usually quantitative) over the other. Using and/or integrating both methods thus requires a deliberate choice and sustained commitment on the part of a research team; facilitating such a choice is one of the primary goals of this document.

Many researchers have stressed the limitations of different approaches and/or called for more methodological pluralism in development research. Indeed, starting with the work of Epstein (1962), many researchers have made important contributions to development research by working across methodological lines (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998, Bamberger 2000, Gacitua-Mario and Wodon 2001). Ideally, researchers should endeavor to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each approach and discern practical strategies for combining them on a more regular basis when assessing social capital (Kanbur 2003, Rao 2002).<sup>9</sup>

Quantitative techniques are, in general, less effective in understanding *context* and *process*. That is, they are not as adept at depicting the process, or series of events, instigated by a particular intervention. And it is this *process* that ultimately results in observed impacts. For example, consider a community-driven development (CDD) project that sets up a committee in a village and provides it with funding to build a primary school. Even if an exemplary quantitative impact evaluation were set up, it would typically employ quantitative outcome indicators, such as increased school enrollment or the extent to which benefits were well targeted to the poor. Carefully constructed questions could also shed light on the degree of heterogeneity among participants actively involved in decision making, as well as on subjective outcomes, such as changes in levels of intra- and inter-group trust.

<sup>8</sup> On the variety of approaches to establishing “causality,” see Salmon (1997), Mahoney (2000), and Gerring (2001).

<sup>9</sup> King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) and Brady and Collier (2004) provide more academic treatments of the potential commonalities of quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Nevertheless, quantitative analysis does not have the capacity to describe the complex deliberations of local politics in the village that, for example, led to the formation of the committee or the details of its deliberations. Nor can it help researchers understand why certain groups were included and others excluded from the committee, or how and why some individuals came to dominate the local political process. Identified as *process* issues, these concerns can be crucial to *understanding* impact, as opposed to simply *measuring* it. Qualitative methods are particularly effective in delving deeper into issues of process.

A judicious mix of qualitative and quantitative methods can thus provide a more comprehensive and nuanced evaluation of possible interventions (Patton 1987, World Bank 2005b).<sup>10</sup> Quantitative methods are well suited to measuring levels and changes in impacts. They are also suitable for drawing inferences from observed statistical relations between these impacts and other covariates. Although qualitative research can also be enumerated to yield similar data (Narayan et al. 2000), the practice is not yet commonplace.

The benefits of integrating quantitative and qualitative methods include more informed development of hypotheses; better data collection processes; fewer researcher-imposed parameters; deeper understanding of the context of analysis and results; triangulation of findings; exploring new lines of thinking unanticipated by the research team; understanding the nuances of related processes and cause-and-effect relations; and more actionable policy recommendations. When applied together, quantitative and qualitative methods can provide a more complete mapping of the local institutional landscape. Yet the simultaneous use of both methods needs to be encouraged on a more systematic and reliable basis; hence the companion documents on the two respective techniques.

An example of the benefits of triangulation using both quantitative and qualitative data comes from a poverty assessment in Vietnam:

We combined a household survey with qualitative methods. Doing the two together was invaluable. Ninety percent of the outcomes were the same using the different measures. But several findings were new: urban poverty issues had been ignored before, but using qualitative methods we found that it was very brutal and quite different from rural poverty. Gender differences were the same—we were able to unpackage and time-load violence issues using qualitative methods, which were very important for really understanding how to improve these women’s lives. Most importantly, we found that when we presented this combination of data and findings to the government, they found the results more palatable. The qualitative findings made sense and helped them reach [an] intuitive understanding of some of the more quantitative results. (Agarwal 2001)

In summary, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques offers task managers several advantages. First, they gain a clearer, more nuanced understanding of the context of the communities and/or regions for which they design, monitor, and evaluate development interventions. Second, the two methods in combination can provide baseline socio-economic information that can improve the design of both research tools (e.g., a living standards survey or poverty assessment survey) and development projects. Third, quantitative and qualitative

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<sup>10</sup> On the distinctive challenges that CDD-type development projects pose for evaluation, and some possible responses to these challenges, see Whiteside, Woolcock, and Briggs (2005).

research methods together yield better impact and evaluation data, enabling teams to understand the full impact of projects on social capital (which can be positive, negative, or both), and conversely, whether areas with high levels of social capital experience more successful project implementation than areas with lower levels of social capital.

## **Applying Social Capital Research to Development Policies and Projects**

As noted above, investigations of social capital, especially studies that use a mixed-method approach, shed particular light on issues of causality, process, and context. An examination of how groups and networks function in a given community can, for example, reveal how people or households deploy different relationships for survival or mobility. By focusing on questions of collective action and cooperation, a mixed-method approach can reveal the degree of civic capacity within a community.

Social capital research can also identify the kinds of incentives that can encourage community members to collaborate on projects of shared interest. If donors believe that high levels of collective action will contribute to greater development effectiveness, these findings may then inform the targeting or selection of a CDD-type operation. In fact, studies of political action and empowerment are important for understanding how CDD-type projects work on the ground, as they reveal how local politics influence the allocation of funds and/or the inclusion or exclusion of particular groups from project benefits.

At the global policy level, social capital research has given the poor a greater voice in the development of World Bank policies. The Bank's multi-country qualitative study, *Voices of the Poor* (Narayan et al. 2000a and 2000b), directly contributed to its *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty* (World Bank 2001). It is one example of how large-scale qualitative research can help change the attitudes and policies of an influential development organization, leading it to define poverty more holistically. Based on *Voices of the Poor* and other social capital studies, the WDR stressed the importance of working with the networks of poor people to increase their access to resources and link them to intermediary organizations, institutions, and international markets (see example in Box 1). Such studies have also facilitated parallel initiatives in good governance, social accountability, and conflict management.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> An analysis of the intellectual and strategic role played by the *idea* of social capital in contributing to these various developments is outlined in Bebbington et al. (2006).

### **Box 1. Breaking the “inequality trap” in Indian slums**

Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai argues that a key form of the powerlessness experienced by the poor is that of living with “negative terms of recognition.” This term, drawn from his work on slum dwellers in India, refers to the experience of marginalized groups who are routinely ignored or treated with contempt by government officials, employers, and fellow citizens. Such groups encounter enormous obstacles to advancement and, over time, come to subscribe to norms “whose social effect is to further diminish their dignity, exacerbate their inequality, and deepen their lack of access to material goods and services” (Appadurai 2004, 66).

In these circumstances, the poor are not only subject to persistent and overt discrimination, they become complicit in this discrimination. Their revealed “adaptive preference” (Nussbaum 2000) is for menial occupations and adherence to norms and subservient behavior that legitimize and perpetuate their powerlessness. Dire material circumstances, rational expectations about limited prospects for upward mobility, and strongly internalized beliefs regarding both the legitimacy and immutability of their situation conspire to create what might be called an “inequality trap” (World Bank 2005b).

Breaking out of such inequality traps and improving how the poor are “recognized,” both by themselves and others, starts with building what Appadurai calls the “capacity to aspire,” that is, the ability to envision and enact alternative futures and not passively accept a seemingly prescribed lot in life. For Appadurai, the “capacity to aspire” thrives in and through group organizing and public dialogue and the opportunities that such interactions offer for practice, exploration, conjecture, and refutation (Ray 2003).<sup>a</sup> Such opportunities often serve as a starting point for powerless groups to both express their voice and become “recognized” by different and more powerful groups that otherwise lack a motivation to acknowledge them at all.

A cooperative association of sex workers in a Calcutta slum, for example, gave its individual members a voice, a public presence, and a capacity to realize its interests that would have otherwise been utterly denied them (see Rao and Walton 2004). Young and female (often illegal immigrants trafficked from neighboring countries), sex workers were contractually bound to work long hours for ruthless bosses who (rightly) feared a loss in revenue if safe sex practices were adopted. Persistent efforts by the All India Institute for Hygiene and Public Health to organize the women into a union, however, eventually gave them the confidence and competence to increase contraceptive use by their clients, despite considerable resistance from brothel owners.

<sup>a</sup> Debraj Ray argues that the combination of material poverty and lack of connectedness to groups denies marginal groups opportunities to interact in associations, a situation that leads to “aspirations failures.” Such failures are ultimately caused by “the absence of a critical mass of people who are better off than the person in question, yet not so much better off that their economic well-being is thought to be unattainable.” (Ray 2003, 7)

*Sources:* Appadurai (2004); Ray (2003); Jha, Rao, and Woolcock (2005).

At the country level, qualitative and mixed-method research has helped government officials and other development actors understand what lies behind survey numbers and thus craft more practical policies. Information regarding the limitations of informal social networks in situations of extreme impoverishment (as in the poorest transition countries in ECA) has, for example, contributed to the policy debate on increasing access to formal institutions.

Social capital research has also improved the ability of development agencies to communicate project aims to local communities. A considerable body of qualitative research on patterns of inclusion in and exclusion from informal social networks has, for example, influenced the design of project communication strategies, enabling project administrators to reach more members of a target community. In addition, studies on the differential impact of “bonding” social capital (within a community), “bridging” social capital (horizontal links among heterogeneous actors) and “linking” social capital (vertical links) have drawn attention to the importance of linkages between poor communities and larger networks (World Bank 2000). These studies have led

NGOs to help communities build organizational capacity and strengthen their links to outside institutions and markets as a way of enhancing mobility of the poor.

Social capital research has furthermore made an important contribution to impact evaluation. A recent World Bank mixed-methods study, for example, concluded that the Thailand Social Investment Fund was an “effective instrument” for building leadership and networks, as well as enhancing the voice of villagers vis-à-vis formal authorities (World Bank 2006c). In addition, the study demonstrated that development interventions can affect social networks both positively and negatively. Qualitative tools are equally useful for monitoring purposes, especially when “building social capital” is a program objective. The ability of qualitative research to follow up on respondent answers with open-ended “why” questions can, for example, encourage locally influenced solutions to seemingly intractable development dilemmas, such as community conflict. The KALAHI-CIDSS project in the Philippines is presently using quantitative and qualitative methods in an iterative fashion to allow the project team to understand the social capital impacts of this CDD-type project (World Bank 2005a).

Overall, qualitative research on social capital has contributed to improving the design of development projects. To cite one example, a large three-year study (Barron, Diprose and Woolcock 2006) used qualitative tools extensively to investigate how the Kecamatan Development Project (KDP, a nation-wide CDD program in Indonesia) shaped community capacity for conflict resolution. The results of the mixed-methods research study showed that KDP generated fewer violent conflicts than other similar projects, and could, when well implemented, strengthen local government. These findings have since been integrated into the design of new projects for conflict-ridden areas of rural Indonesia (e.g., Support for Poor and Disadvantaged Areas project).

Providing even the most basic social services and infrastructure is a major logistical challenge in remote areas of Indonesia. Knowledge of how best to prevent and mitigate conflicts that project interventions themselves may generate is thus important,<sup>12</sup> as is knowledge of how to build the capacity and accessibility of local government line ministries. The qualitative research conducted for the KDP study produced a rich storehouse of information on these topics and, equally important, trained local personnel. Both became resources for the design and implementation of the new rural project.

In another example, social capital research enabled the rapid redesign of a World Bank project in West Africa. The project initially exacerbated underlying conflicts between farmers and herders, in part because it had not conducted the necessary research to anticipate such problems. Violence erupted. In between phases of the project, however, this trend was reversed and significant research, capacity building, and other investments were made to ensure that the project addressed local conflicts of interest rather than allowing them to escalate into violence.

Finally, qualitative methods can maximize the quality and usefulness of quantitative instruments. In Albania, for example, a major household survey was conducted as part of that country’s

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<sup>12</sup> New resources brought to a community by a development project (which are typically not distributed to all community residents) and the process of selecting recipients for these resources (which may not be sufficiently transparent, even if local leaders are involved) can create significant chasms within an otherwise harmonious community.

poverty assessment, which in turn became the basis for designing its national poverty reduction strategy. The survey included a module on the role that social networks and trust play in shaping poverty mitigation strategies. The country team also conducted an extensive round of qualitative pre-testing to ensure that the tone and content of all survey questions, initially designed and drafted in English, accurately reflected Albanian realities and policy goals. (A similar approach was adopted with the Guatemala Poverty Assessment some years before, which also used a mixed-methods approach to assess social capital.)<sup>13</sup>

## Overview of Qualitative Tools used in Social Capital Research

This section provides an overview of those tools that are most closely associated with the qualitative tradition. While they can be used in their own right, ideally these tools should be part of a broader, integrated methodological strategy for researching social capital. The text that follows is not intended to provide “how-to” guidance on the use of these tools. Rather, it seeks to give the reader a broad understanding of which qualitative tools are relevant to different aspects of social capital research. Additional resources are cited that offer detailed, practical instructions on how to apply these tools.

The first category of qualitative methods can be referred to as participatory approaches (Mikkelsen 1995, Narayan 1995, Robb 2002). Introduced to scholars and practitioners largely through the work of Robert Chambers (and, more recently, Kumar and Chambers 2002), participatory techniques—such as Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPA)—help development agencies learn about local poverty and project impacts in cost-effective ways.

The Rapid Rural Appraisal is especially useful with illiterate respondents (not all of whom are poor), allowing researchers to learn about their lives using simple techniques such as wealth rankings, oral histories, role playing, games, small group discussions, transect walks (see following section), and village map drawings. These techniques permit respondents who are not trained in quantitative reasoning, or who have little education, to provide meaningful graphic representations of their lives in a manner that gives outside researchers a quick snapshot of certain aspects of their living conditions.

RRA can be said to involve *instrumental* participation through novel techniques that enable researchers to better understand their subjects. A related approach is to use *transformative* participation techniques, such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), the goal of which is to facilitate a dialogue (rather than extract information) that assists the poor and others to learn about themselves and thereby gain new insights that lead to social change (“empowerment”).<sup>14</sup> In PRA exercises, a skilled facilitator helps communities generate tangible visual diagrams of the

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<sup>13</sup> For the Albania Poverty Assessment, see World Bank (2003a); for the Guatemala Poverty Assessment, see World Bank (2003b).

<sup>14</sup> The Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) in India has used a related approach with great success, helping poor slum dwellers to compile basic data on themselves that they can then present to municipal governments for the purpose of obtaining resources to which they are legally entitled. Participatory approaches, however, have the potential for abuse—see Cooke and Kothari (2001) and Brock and McGee (2002).



processes that lead to deprivation or illness, strategies that are used in times of crisis, and fluctuation of resource availability and prices across different seasons. Eliciting information in this format helps the poor to conceive of potentially more effective ways to respond to the economic, political, and social challenges in their lives in ways that are not obvious *ex ante*.

Participatory methods are conducted in groups. It is essential, therefore, that participants include representatives from each of the major subgroups in a community. The idea is that if a group reaches consensus on a particular issue after some discussion, this consensus will then be representative of views in a given community, be it a village or slum neighborhood, because outlying views would have been set aside in the process of debate. For this technique to work, the discussion must be extremely well moderated. The moderator must be sufficiently dynamic to steer the discussion in a meaningful direction, deftly navigate his or her way around potential conflicts and, in the end, establish a consensus. The moderator's role is thus the key to ensuring that high-quality data is gathered from a group discussion—an inadequate or inexperienced moderator can affect the quality of the data in a manner that is much more acute than an equivalently inadequate interviewer working with a structured quantitative questionnaire.

Other common qualitative tools encounter similar constraints. For example, focus group discussions, in which small, intentionally diverse or homogenous groups meet to discuss a particular issue, are also guided by a moderator with the intent of reaching consensus on key issues. The quality of insights yielded by focus groups is thus similarly dependent on the quality of the moderator. A focus group differs from a PRA in that it is primarily instrumental in purpose and typically does not use the mapping and diagramming techniques characteristic of PRAs and RRAs. However, it should be noted that divergence from the consensus reached in focus groups may provide interesting insights, just as outliers in a regression analysis can sometimes be very revealing.

Another important qualitative tool is the key-informant interview, that is, an interview with someone who is a formal or informal community leader or who has a particular perspective relevant to the study. Life histories and open-ended personal interviews are additional tools that have long been used in qualitative research.

Finally, the qualitative investigator can engage in varying degrees of “participant observation” as an actual member (e.g., a biography of growing up in a slum), a perceived actual member (e.g., a spy or a police informant in a drug cartel), an invited long-term guest (e.g., an anthropologist), or a more distant and detached short-term observer of a specific community. A fifth qualitative approach is textual analysis. Historians, archeologists, linguists, and scholars in cultural studies use such techniques to analyze various forms of media, ranging from archived legal documents, newspapers, artifacts, and government records to contemporary photographs, films, music, websites, and television reports.

## **Applying Qualitative Tools to the Six Dimensions of Social Capital**

Each of the qualitative tools described in the previous section can be used to research the effects of social capital in poor and non-poor communities alike. The subsections that follow provide

analytical frameworks—key questions for focus group discussions and interviews, as well as potentially useful group activities—for each of the six dimensions of social capital outlined in the introduction to this paper. Because the six dimensions overlap in practice, some questions appear under more than one dimension. By the same token, an inquiry regarding one dimension may shed light on the other dimensions. Naturally, not all questions and issues included in the analytical frameworks that follow will be appropriate in every case. The entries below are therefore not intended as direct questions to respondents, but to better focus the research team on relevant concerns.

### **Dimension 1: Groups and Networks**

Understanding the groups and networks that enable people to access resources and collaborate to achieve shared goals is an important part of the concept of social capital. Informal networks are manifested in spontaneous, informal, and unregulated exchanges of information and resources within communities, as well as efforts at cooperation, coordination, and mutual assistance that help maximize the utilization of available resources. Informal networks can be connected through horizontal and vertical relationships and are shaped by a variety of environmental factors, including the market, kinship, and friendship.

Another kind of network consists of associations, in which members are linked horizontally. Such networks often have clearly delineated structures, roles, and rules that govern how group members cooperate to achieve common goals. These networks also have the potential to nurture self-help, mutual help, solidarity, and cooperative efforts in a community. “Linking” (vertical) social capital, on the other hand, includes relations and interactions between a community and its leaders and extends to wider relations between the village, the government, and the marketplace.

The questions listed below are intended to get at the nature and extent of peoples’ participation in various types of social organizations and networks (formal and informal), and the range of transactions that take place within these networks. The questions also consider the diversity of a given group’s membership, how its leadership is selected, and how member involvement changes over time.

#### **A.1 The community context: Availability and accessibility of resources and services**

- What are the key resources (including natural resources, cultural and recreational facilities, markets, communications infrastructure, etc.) available in the community? How is access to these resources distributed among households and groups?
- How are assets such as wealth, land, immovable property, education, and reputation distributed in the community? In other words, what percentage of the population has access to such assets?
- What key services (social, municipal, government, etc.) are provided in the community? How is access to these services distributed among households and groups?

- What are the primary obstacles facing the community (environmental, geographic, ethnic tensions, poor trade routes, water or land rights, etc.)?
- Do poor or marginalized groups experience greater obstacles in accessing community resources and/or services?

## A.2 Access to groups and networks

- What formal and informal groups, associations, and networks exist in the community?
- Focus on several formal and informal groups and summarize their explicit and implicit functions. How often are the groups activated? Are informal groups based on occasions (e.g., weddings, births, or deaths)? What other triggers bring members of a group together?
- Who plays a leadership or mobilizing role in the groups or networks?
- What factors contribute to leadership within such groups (e.g., age, elections, education, socioeconomic status, gender)?
- Describe the diversity of roles within the groups or networks.
- What networks or groups do people typically rely on to resolve issues of daily life?
- What is exchanged (e.g., goods, services, favors, information, goods, moral support, etc.) in community groups or networks?
- What are the most important aims of the exchange (e.g., to meet basic needs, increase income, meet basic social obligations, maintain or expand potentially useful relationships, or some combination thereof)?
- Who do people tend to assist in their daily routine? How, in what circumstances, and how often does this assistance take place?
- What groups, individuals, or networks do people feel morally or socially obligated to assist?
- Ask key respondents to identify and map their most significant networks. Estimate the number of people in each of the various networks.
- At what different public or private settings or events do groups or networks come together? How many people do they bring together? How often do these meetings occur?
- How do individuals or households enter into networks and maintain network ties?
- What characteristics are most valued among network members (e.g., trustworthiness, reciprocity, cooperation, honesty, community respect, etc.)?
- Who are the most socially or economically isolated people in the community? How does this isolation correlate with the kind or extent of networks to which these people belong?

## B. Other methodologies for understanding groups and networks

The *transect walk* is a participatory method that allows a research team to explore and better understand the significance of spatial differences in a given community. A research team walks with local guides through a settlement to the periphery. Since local people often see things that outsiders miss, the guides take the lead in describing their perceptions, while the study team records their observations. After the walk, the study team and local people produce a transect diagram (a stylized representation of the area covered by the walk(s)). A transect walk explores the following dimensions of community:

- physical and geographical parameters of the community, including important sub-communities or neighborhoods; formal boundaries, such as government municipalities; and informal boundaries, such as those demarcated by shared resources (e.g., water)
- location of community resources, infrastructure, and facilities
- factors that shape geographic opportunities or limitations in the community, such as isolation, agro-ecological zone, flood risks, predominant malaria, HIV/AIDS, etc.
- significant social groups that may be defined by ethnicity, gender, language, religion, tribe, or caste affiliation<sup>15</sup>
- key social, political, and/or economic cleavages reflected in the layout of neighborhoods or infrastructure

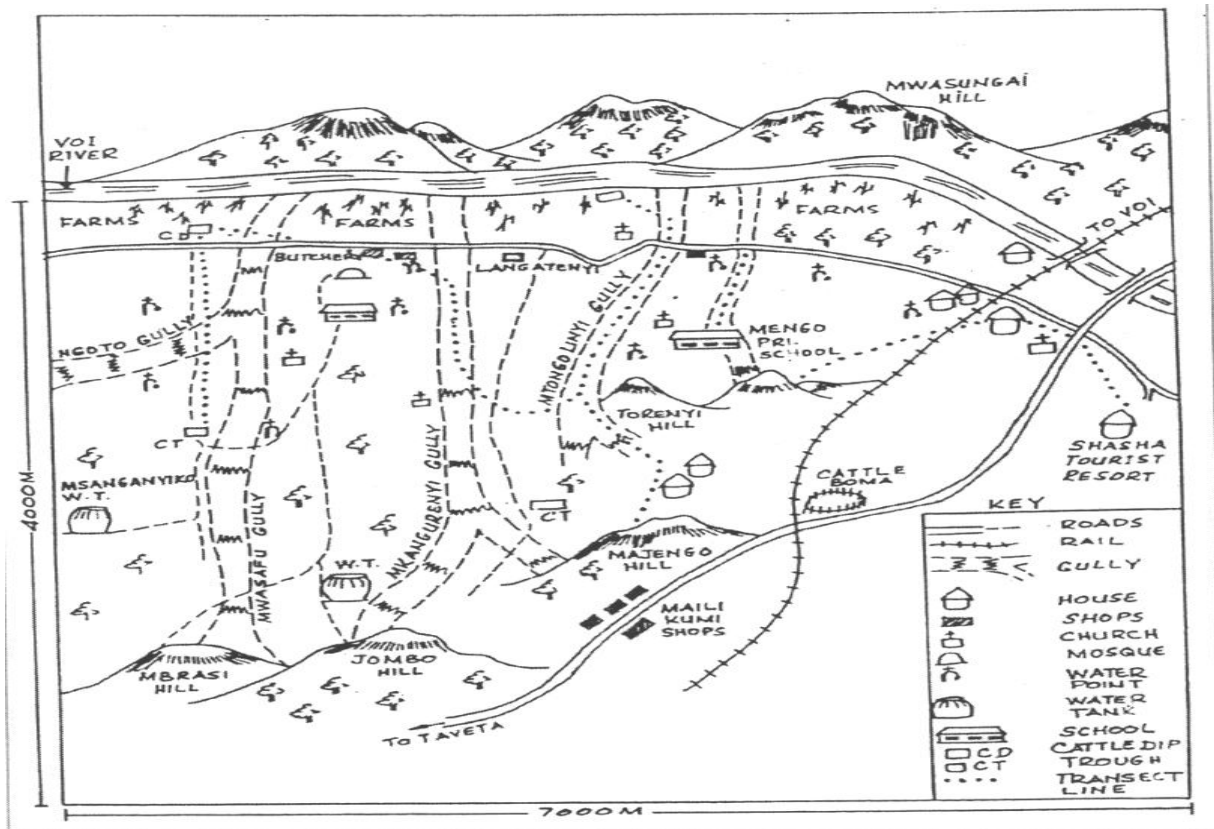
Data from the transect walk can be triangulated by combining it with local maps, censuses, information from land registries, and other relevant and available documents. It should be noted that a visual diagram is not the sole output of a transect walk, which should also generate documentation of the local processes and reasoning that inform the diagram.

*Additional resources on transect walks:* Negri et al. (1998), Mahiri (1998); or Rietbergen-McCracken and Narayan (1998).

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<sup>15</sup> Note that these categories can overlap in complicated ways, especially when different language groups are involved. Field researchers must have a deep understanding of the local context so that their questions regarding different social groups are both relevant and understandable to local residents.

Figure 1. Example of a transect diagram



Source: Oduor-Naoh et al. (1992). (The map can be downloaded from the website of the International Council on Mining and Metals, <http://www.icmm.com/publications/845Tool6.pdf>; accessed March 2006.)

### Box 2. Social networks in the Kyrgyz Republic

A World Bank qualitative study of 2004 examines the impact of rapid socioeconomic change on the social networks of poor and non-poor households in rural and urban communities in the Kyrgyz Republic. Given the importance of informal networks for gaining access to “deficit” goods and services during the Soviet era, the study examines whether social networks have since altered, and if so, how.

The study demonstrates that networks continue to be an integral part of everyday life in Kyrgyz society, where personal and professional connections remain the primary currency for gaining access to public services, jobs, and higher education. However, poverty and market penetration have led to a shift from family- and clan-based networks to those based on work, friendship, and neighborhoods. Networks of the poor and non-poor have become polarized. The networks of the poor have significantly decreased in size, while those of the non-poor, especially in urban communities, are moving away from ascriptive relationships and becoming “modern,” interest-based networks. Money has become integral to maintaining these networks. Indigenous forms of cooperation, such as mutual aid obligations and rotating saving clubs, remain, but the requirement of cash contributions now makes them inaccessible to the poor. For the same reason, the poor find it difficult to participate in lifecycle or ceremonial events. As a result, they either become gradually excluded or simply remove themselves from kinship-based and other important networks in order to save face.

The study demonstrates that the decreasing size of the social networks and social capital among the poor has resulted in their greater economic, geographic, and social isolation, as well as further impoverishment. The non-poor are diversifying their networks and expanding their access to a vast array of resources, while the shrinking networks of the poor have reduced their access to reliable health care, good education, and timely social assistance services, all of which are increasingly mediated by personal connections.

Source: Kuehnast and Dudwick (2004)

## **Dimension 2: Trust and Solidarity**

This dimension of social capital refers to the extent to which people feel they can rely on relatives, neighbors, colleagues, acquaintances, key service providers, and even strangers, either to assist them or (at least) do them no harm. Adequately defining “trust” in a given social context is a prerequisite for understanding the complexities of human relationships. Sometimes trust is a choice; in other cases, it reflects a necessary dependency based on established contacts or familiar networks. Distinguishing between these two ends of the continuum is important for understanding the range of people’s social relationships and the ability of these relationships to endure difficult or rapidly changing circumstances.

### **A. Community context and history**

- What is the population size and demographic composition of the community, including household type?
- What is the history of the community? What important events, natural disasters, significant changes in the prosperity and/or level of well-being have affected (or are affecting) the community?
- How familiar are members of the group or network with one another?
- How long have people in a given neighborhood or community lived together? How well do they know one another?
- What are the important social groups in the community (e.g., as identified by caste, religion, ethnicity, race, tribal affiliation, region, etc.)?
- How socially heterogeneous or homogeneous is the community?
- Have new groups recently entered the community (e.g., refugees or economic migrants)?
- What are the primary livelihoods of both men and women? Of different ethnic groups?

### **B. Relationships between local norms, patterns of governance, and trust**

- What are the cultural and social norms of interaction (e.g., within the building, block, neighborhood, larger community)?
- How do national and local governance affect trust among groups and between individuals?
- To what institutions (formal or informal) do people turn when they have individual or family problems?
- On whom do people rely for different kinds of assistance (e.g., goods, labor, cash, finding employment, entering university, etc.)?
- How is trust distributed in the community (e.g., primarily within extended families or clans or through specific networks and/or localities)?

- Do patterns of mistrust and suspicion exist between households or among groups?
- What are the relevant cleavages? What is the history of these cleavages?

### C. Other methodologies for understanding trust and solidarity

The *transect walk* (described in subsection 1.B. above) sheds light on social cleavages as they are reflected in the spatial patterns of community structures and facility usage.

A *historical matrix*<sup>16</sup> examines changes in a community or within a group. Periods of time are marked along the horizontal axis, with resources or specific items under discussion listed along the vertical axis. By indicating the relative amount of available resources at different points in time, people can develop a visual representation of variation in resources over time in the community.

*Additional resource on historical matrices:* Thompson and Freudenberger (1997).

**Table 1. Example of a historical matrix**

	<i>When community elders were children (circa 1935)</i>	<i>Year of independence (1960)</i>	<i>Year the school was built (1975)</i>	<i>Present</i>
Population of the village				
Diversity of social groups				
Frequency of community-wide projects to assist all				
Breadth of participation in annual festival				
Frequency of gift exchange between families				
Frequency of conflicts over natural resources				
Intensity of state intervention in community resource issues				

*Source:* Adapted from Thompson and Freudenberger (1997).

*Diary entries* supplement data collected through key respondent interviews and/or group discussions. In general, the following activities are recorded in a research diary:

- daily thoughts and reflections of an interviewer, which record yet another layer of analysis (often the “lens” of the trained researcher is not considered when local staff are trained for a qualitative study)
- observation of the environment and people’s behavior at the research sites

**Box 3. Excerpt from the diary of a local researcher**

**February 7, 2004.** Maybe it was the weather that lifted my mood [so that] when I noticed the young girls playing hopscotch in the street, my thoughts went back to my childhood and I suddenly felt a strong desire to join them and forget about everything, at least for a moment. Unfortunately, I did not have even a second. At the bus stop I spotted two women who were upset, discussing problems of school-age kids in the village. At the very same moment we witnessed a situation where a young driver around 30 years old rudely closed the doors of a taxi minibus right in front of the kids. The women were emphasizing their dissatisfaction with the transport department and its low quality of service. [They] also referred to the ethnic segregation of the village population. One claimed that the Kyrgyz suffered more from poverty and the inability to pay for transport, while the majority of drivers were Uzbeks. In the beginning of the conversation, I tried not to pay attention to such details. However, all of us once were kids, and now we live for them. Is it so difficult to give a lift to these defenseless “angels” for just half a kilometer—especially as the minibus is almost always empty?

*Source:* Background material for Kuehnast (forthcoming).

A *resource exchange matrix* looks at what goods and services are exchanged in specific networks, as well as the purpose of such exchanges. The two matrices that follow were adapted from the social networks study in the Kyrgyz Republic (Kuehnast and Dudwick 2004) and are offered here as useful tools for investigating social trust. The first matrix addresses questions such as: “What do you give, and to whom?” and “What do you receive, and from whom?” It is filled out with the help of an interviewer using one of the following answers: “always,” “most of the time,” “sometimes,” “seldom or never.”

**Table 2. Resource exchange matrix: Example 1**

<i>Goods/services being transacted</i>	<i>What do you give/receive from...?</i>			
	<i>People who have more than me</i>	<i>People who have less than me</i>	<i>People who have about the same as me</i>	<i>Closely related family members (i.e., siblings, parents, children)</i>
Cash				
Food				
Clothes				
Medicine				
School supplies				
Household items				
Household appliances				
Furniture				
Introductions to potential employers, doctors, school directors, and other influential people				
Important information (about jobs, humanitarian assistance, etc.)				
Family members living in other households				
Temporary, non-paying household member who contributes some kind of support				
In-kind services (e.g., babysitting; cooking; house repair, etc.)				
Other transactions (specify)				
Other (specify)				

*Note:* This table is typically filled in using estimates of frequency of exchange; see Table 3.

*Source:* Adapted from Kuehnast and Dudwick (2004).



The second matrix illustrates the kinds of people that are integral to one household in rural Kyrgyz Republic and address the question, “To whom do you turn to for help or assistance?”

**Table 3. Research exchange matrix: Example 2**

<i>Networks</i>	<i>To whom do you turn to . . .</i>		
	<i>Meet minimum basic needs</i>	<i>Improve social or economic situation</i>	<i>Maintain social relationships</i>
Closely related family members (siblings, parents, children)	Most of the time	Sometimes	Always
Nearby friends	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes
Neighbors	Most of the time	Most of the time	Most of the time
Urban relatives	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes
Rural relatives	Most of the time	Most of the time	Most of the time
Urban friends	Never	Never	Never
Rural friends	Never	Never	Sometimes
Work colleagues	Never	Seldom	Sometimes
Association members	Never	Never	Never
NGOs	Never	Never	Never
Religious organization	Never	Never	Never
Community elder or traditional leader	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes
Charities	Never	Sometimes	Never
Other (specify)			

Source: Adapted from Kuehnast and Dudwick (2004).

### Dimension 3: Collective Action and Cooperation

Collective action and cooperation are closely related to the dimension of trust and solidarity, however, the former dimension explores in greater depth whether and how people work with others in their community on joint projects and/or in response to a problem or crisis. It also considers the consequences of violating community expectations regarding participation norms. To understand this dimension, interviews with formal and informal community leaders or leaders of NGOs, associations, unions, or other groups (key-respondent interviews) can prove very useful for triangulating data collected in focus group discussions.

#### A. Community context and history

- What do people consider the most pressing problems in the community? How do they rank them in terms of importance?
- To what extent do community members collaborate with one another in order to solve these problems?
- What cultural, social, or community traditions affect patterns of mutual assistance, cooperation, and collective action?

- How do national, regional, and/or local governance patterns affect collective action (are they constraints to organization or, alternatively, do they demand informal support when public funds are inadequate, such as for school maintenance)?
- Describe recent examples of collective action that have taken place in the community (or a segment of the community). What was the course and outcome of these activities?
- Who initiated the activities? How were people mobilized?
- Do social, cultural, or legal constraints limit the participation of specific groups (e.g., women, young people, poor people, minorities, etc.)?
- Are some groups, neighborhoods, and/or households more likely than others to work together, and if so, why?
- Are some groups, neighborhoods, and/or households more likely to exclude themselves or be excluded from collective activity, and if so, why?
- What kinds of constraints limit peoples' ability or willingness to work together (e.g., lack of time, lack of trust or confidence in outcomes, suspicion toward the mobilizers, etc.)?
- What are the social sanctions for violating expected norms of collective action in the community?

#### B. Other group activities for understanding cooperation and collective action

*Rankings* are a useful tool for eliciting information on group problems, issues, and/or needs, as well as for prioritizing these items.

- Ask community leaders or a focus group to list roughly six main problems in their community and then rank them in order of importance. Follow up with specific who, what, where, and why questions to crosscheck and triangulate the ranking results.
- What actions has the community taken to solve these problems collectively?

For example, a group of young urban women might provide the following list and rankings (with 1 being the most urgent problem):

**Table 4. Example of community problem ranking**

<i>Problems</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Transport	3
Unemployment	4
Crime and violence	2
Street lighting	1
Garbage collection	6
Public telephone	5

*Additional resource on rankings:* Narayan and Shah (1999).

*Trend analysis* or a *historical matrix* can be used to assess how these priority problems have evolved over time by having a given group conduct the same ranking exercise with respect to a situation five or ten years ago and then comparing the two rankings.

*Additional resource on trend analysis:* Narayan and Shah (1999).

#### **Box 4. Local-level institutions in Bolivia, Burkina Faso, and Indonesia**

A World Bank study of local-level institutions considers how history, state structures, and cultural and social institutions influence the ability of local associations to accumulate assets, obtain credit, and organize collective action, thereby impacting household poverty and welfare. The study was carried out in Bolivia, Burkina Faso, and Indonesia. It used household, community, and district-level data collected through key informant interviews, group discussions, and a household survey. The study considers local associations a manifestation of social capital, but recognizes that social capital can and does exist outside these associations. It concludes that social capital exerts an additional positive effect on household welfare, finding that heterogeneous associations bestow larger benefits on their members than do more homogeneous ones. Social capital helps households better cope with income fluctuations and manage risk because activities undertaken for social purposes spill over into the economic arena. For example, membership in associations that have non-economic objectives can positively affect members' access to credit. The study further reveals that collective action is more frequent in communities with high social capital.

*Sources:* Sandoval et al. (1998), Grootaert (2001).

### **Dimension 4: Information and Communication**

Increasing access to information is increasingly recognized as a central mechanism for helping poor communities strengthen their voice in matters that affect their well-being (World Bank 2002a). The questions below are intended to explore the ways and means by which households receive and share information regarding such issues as the community at large, market conditions, and public services, as well as the extent of their access to communications infrastructure.

#### **A. Community context and history**

- What is the recent and historical context of access to information in the community? (Answering this query may require a review of applicable laws and judicial tradition regarding freedom of information.)
- Inventory the existing communication sources and infrastructure, their actual and perceived reliability, veracity, availability, and the extent to which these sources are used in practice.
- What are the preferred local sources and channels of information?
- What informal sources of information exist in the community? Which members of the community are included or excluded from such sources? (The matrices in subsection 2.C are relevant here.)
- What information is available through different networks? To different households and/or groups (i.e., is there differential distribution within the community)?

- What information is not available to different households and/or groups (i.e., what are the limits of differential distribution within the community)?

## B. Other methodologies for mapping channels of information and communication

*Media analysis* of formal communication channels (e.g., locally available print media, radio and television broadcasts, as well as brochures, newspapers, and posters hung in public spaces, etc.) can supplement interviews. Content analysis (what is discussed, what is not discussed, level of accuracy or distortion, prevailing stereotypes, etc.) provides another perspective on the kinds of information that are available on national and/or local events, policies, laws, etc.

## Dimension 5: Social Cohesion and Inclusion

Social cohesion and inclusion are closely related to the previous four dimensions of social capital, but focus more specifically on the tenacity of social bonds and their dual potential to include or exclude members of community. Cohesion and inclusion can be demonstrated through community events, such as weddings and funerals, or through activities that increase solidarity, strengthen social cohesion, improve communication, provide learning for coordinated activities, promote civic-mindedness and altruistic behavior, and develop a sense of collective consciousness.

### Box 5. Social capital and social cohesion in Cambodia and Rwanda

Recent World Bank case studies investigate the interaction between social capital, social cohesion, and violent conflict in Cambodia and Rwanda. Based on an examination of informal local horizontal and vertical relationships, the studies illustrate the negative effect of violence, viewed as both an independent (a cause) and a dependent (an effect) variable of social capital. Both country case studies demonstrate that social capital has revived in the post-war period and expanded vertically and horizontally in intensity and size, propelled primarily by market forces. New networks go beyond circles of friends and relatives. Although social capital was not destroyed by violence, it has adapted to new situations by adapting new forms, such as a rigid reciprocity based on cash transactions.

*Source:* Colletta and Cullen (2000).

## A. Inclusion and/or exclusion from participation

- What factors support cohesion in the community?
- Are there recurring disagreements in networks and groups, or even demonstrated conflict?
- What community patterns of differentiation and exclusion exist with respect to opportunities, markets, information, and services?
- What are the risks of social discrimination among beneficiaries of social or municipal services? What socioeconomic, political, or religious factors are at work in this discrimination?

- What prevents public services and expenditures from reaching the poorest and most vulnerable groups? Are the reasons related to ethnicity, gender, a political agenda, or geographic isolation?
- What are the patterns of inclusion and/or exclusion in political participation?
- How often do people from different social groups intermarry?

#### B. Patterns of conflict

- What are the patterns of conflict at the community and family level?
- When have conflicts escalated into violence?
- What kinds of conflicts have taken place in the community over the last five years? Ten years? Earlier?
- What are the triggers for everyday conflict among members of a network and/or group (e.g., resource competition, serious social cleavages, socioeconomic inequities)?
- Who are the key actors involved in such conflicts?
- What is the frequency, intensity, and duration of localized conflicts?
- What kinds of mediation have taken place to help the community resolve conflicts? Have these worked? Why? For how long?
- What kinds of retribution are common?
- What forms of justice are generally accepted?

#### C. Other methodologies for understanding social cohesion and inclusion

*Media analysis*, together with analysis of school textbooks and popular literature, can reveal negative stereotypes of particular social groups (e.g., women, minorities, or marginalized groups) that support patterns of exclusion and conflict. Venn diagrams and historical matrices can also be helpful.

*Conflict risk screening* is another tool that can help determine the degree of potential risk of conflict in a community. The risk-screening process consists of inquiries based on eight indicators that aim to capture a deteriorating environment in a given community. In general, as the number of indicators ranked positive increases, the importance of conducting conflict analysis also increases. The indicators that have been used effectively to assess conflict risk at the macro level (which may be relevant to the community level) are:

- violent conflict in the past ten years
- low per capita GNP
- regime instability
- militarization
- ethnic dominance
- active regional conflicts
- high youth unemployment

*Additional resource on conflict risk screening: Sardesai and Wam 2002.<sup>17</sup>*

### **Box 6. Changing patterns of social cohesion in Jamaica**

A recent World Bank study investigates the social networks of poor people in Jamaica as invaluable coping mechanisms during times of economic turmoil and recession. It examines how the poor evaluate local institutions, cultural traditions, and the social ties that provide them vital support. Data for the study was collected through key respondent interviews, group discussions, and case studies in five rural and four urban communities.

The study reveals that globalization has increased competition and mechanization and reduced employment opportunities for poor rural farmers. Although government community development initiatives may reduce poverty in the long run, data from the research sites demonstrates that existing initiatives are failing to target a majority of the poor. The study also finds that social ties and cultural traditions provide the poor with a significant coping mechanism to deal with poverty, but cautions that local traditions and community supports are breaking down in response to changes in social life, material prosperity, and shifting gender roles and responsibilities.

*Sources: Grant and Shillito (2002), Rao and Ibanez (2005).*

*Institutional analysis* can offer insight into which institutions support or undermine local cohesion from the perspective of different groups. Other studies have used such analysis to understand which institutions are the most important in helping or hindering the daily survival of poor people. This process should also be followed up with probing questions to confirm the overall rankings and understand the reasoning behind them.

**Table 5. Example of institutional analysis**

<i>Institutions</i>	<i>Criteria</i> (out of a total score of 50, higher scores mean better performance of the institution)				<i>Overall importance</i> (based on highest cumulative scores; ranking 1 = most important)
	<i>Trust</i>	<i>Provides help when needed</i>	<i>Effective</i>	<i>People play a role in decision making</i>	
Headman	30	30	40	20	120 = #2
Credit coop	10	0	5	0	15 = #6
Church	50	15	20	15	100 = #3
Women's saving group	50	40	25	50	165 = #1
Clinic, etc.	10	25	15	0	50 = #5
Police	20	20	25	5	70 = #4

*Source: Adapted from Narayan and Shah (2002, 38).*

<sup>17</sup> The work referred to here is the Conflict Analysis Framework (CAF) of the World Bank. The CAF was developed by the Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit to enhance conflict sensitivity and the conflict prevention potential of Bank assistance. The framework analyzes key factors that influence conflict, focusing on six areas: social and ethnic relations; governance and political institutions; human rights and security; economic structure and performance; environment and natural resources; and external factors.

## Dimension 6: Empowerment and Political Action

Individuals are empowered to the extent that they have a measure of control over the institutions and processes that directly affect their well-being (World Bank 2002a). The social capital dimension of empowerment and political action explores the sense of satisfaction, personal efficacy, and capacity of network and group members to influence both local events and broader political outcomes. Empowerment and political action can occur within a small neighborhood association or at broader local, regional, or national levels. Each level has its own importance and should be considered separately, as well as in conjunction with the others. This dimension also considers social cleavages, whether related to gender, ethnicity, religion, regionalism, or other factors. Key-informant interviews with political and labor leaders, together with representatives of the judicial system and media, are also important for exploring this dimension.

### A. Governance

- What are the local legal traditions in the community and how do these traditions affect civic capacity?
- What patterns of state building and which state structures shape civic capacity?
- How do customary laws constrain or facilitate the ability of citizens to exert influence over public institutions?
- How do formal laws constrain or facilitate the ability of citizens to exert influence over public institutions?
- To what extent can members of a community hold public institutions and officials accountable for their actions?
- What kinds of formal and informal mechanisms are available to individuals and groups to demand accountability of local leaders and officials?
- Which groups or segments of the community have the greatest influence over public institutions?
- What is the source of influence of these groups (e.g., group size, ability to mobilize members or expand member base, connections to power elite, economic importance)?
- Which groups have the least influence over public institutions and why?

Discussions can be complemented by a *desk study* of the formal and customary laws that affect the political participation of different social groups (e.g., right to associate and organize, vote, recall, or otherwise hold officials accountable).

#### Box 7. Community action in the Brazilian *favelas*

A recent World Bank study looks at employment, violence, and crime rates in ten urban *favelas* (shanty towns) in Brazil. Based on data from focus group discussions and case studies, the study examines the contribution of community organizations, religious institutions, and collective action to social capital in the *favelas*. It concludes that the capacity of community leaders to successfully attract resources to their *favelas* for infrastructure needs is linked to their ability to mobilize the communities to resist evictions and form partnerships with government agencies, officials, and private-sector leaders. Local activism and government action have together led to marked improvements in infrastructure in the shanty towns.

Source: Melo (2002).

## B. Institutional analysis

- Ask respondents to inventory formal and informal institutions in the community (see previous example).
- What is the relative impact, accessibility, and importance of these institutions vis-à-vis each other within the community?
- What are the relationships among the different institutions?
- What influence do community members have over formal and/or informal institutions?

### **Box 8. CDD projects and local conflict: Part of the problem or part of the solution?**

Although community-driven development (CDD) projects claim to both harness and enhance social institutions, little is known about whether and how they actually accomplish these goals (Mansuri and Rao 2004). What *is* known about the processes and outcomes of deliberative institutions more generally suggests that CDD projects—with their emphasis on the participation of marginalized groups in decision making—require a different analytical framework than those typically applied to top-down, adversarially oriented institutions (such as political parties and labor unions), which are characterized by conventional interest-group politics. A recent study of the Kecamatan Development Project (KDP) in Indonesia focuses on precisely such a framework.

KDP is one of the World Bank's largest CDD projects. A joint initiative of the Government of Indonesia and the World Bank, the project operates in 28,000 villages across Indonesia and allocates grant money to sub-districts. The sub-districts invite groups of poor villagers (at least two of whom must be women) to compete for funds on the basis of a formal proposal; usually 8–10 proposals in total are submitted. The merits of such proposals (i.e., whether they are technically sound, sustainable, likely to have broad economic impact, etc.) are decided by their peers and vetted through an open competition. KDP thus uses strong material incentives (the prospect of receiving a grant) to give villagers experience with a transparent deliberative process and the conflicts to which it gives rise. In this sense, it is a local governance project as much as a development project.

The KDP project fits what one analyst of deliberative institutions has called the “participatory collaborative” mode of governance (Fung 2002). The routines, institutions, and norms of this type of governance are largely decentralized, focus on joint public problem solving, invite broad public participation, and occur in a more or less continuous and institutionalized way. A recent assessment (which used primarily qualitative research techniques) of the impact of KDP on local decision making finds that, when well implemented, the project helps participants cultivate more constructive spaces and procedures for addressing conflicts than those which result from ambiguous rules (Barron, Diprose, and Woolcock 2006; Barron et al. 2004). In this sense, the project helps improve the political agency of marginalized groups. The beginning stage of such a transformation—in which unequal groups build the capacity to peacefully engage one another in conflict—is a humble but nontrivial outcome for a development project. When KDP is less well implemented, however, particularly in environments where conflicts arise from intense competition for political office, project resources can become another source of contention among candidates and/or combatants, sometimes with tragic consequences (Anderson 1999 and Uvin 1998).

*Sources:* Guggenheim (2006), Gibson and Woolcock (2005), Anderson (1999), Uvin (1998).

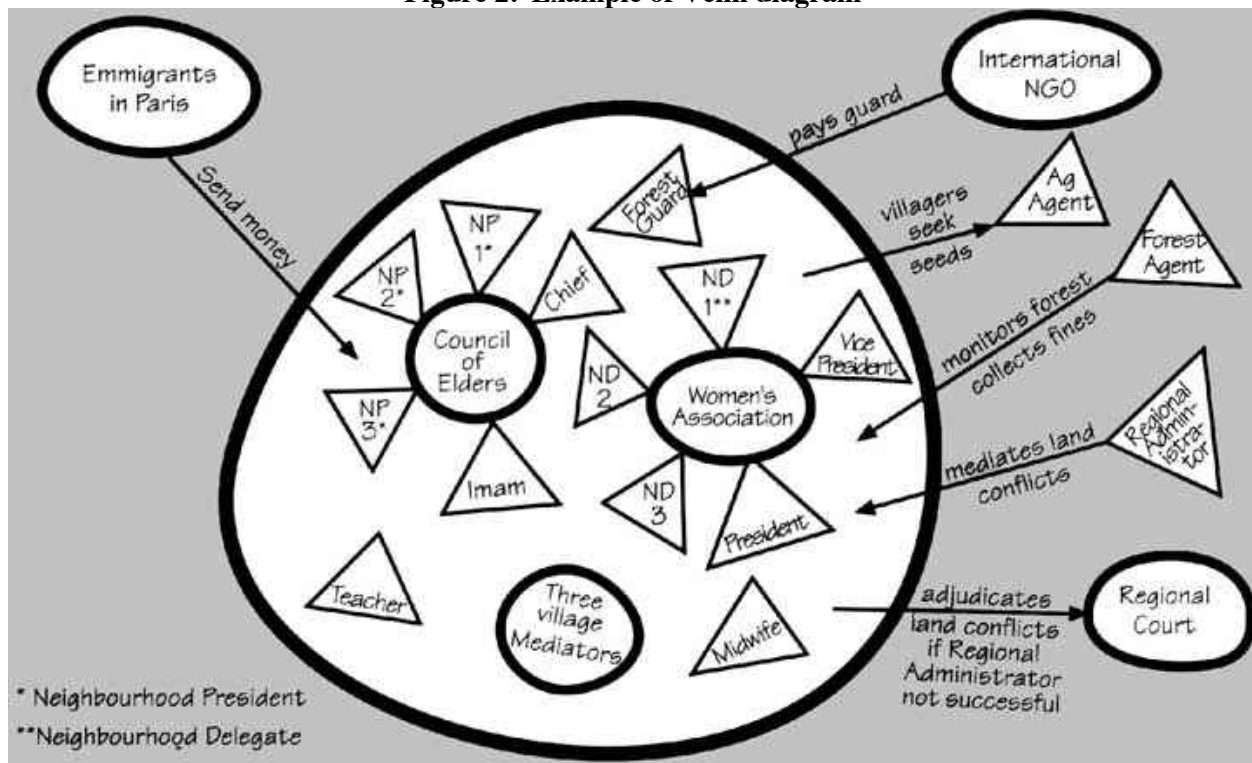


### C. Other group methodologies for understanding empowerment and political action

*Venn diagrams* are an important complement to institutional analysis, as they provide valuable insights into power structures and decision-making processes, as well as the relative importance of public services and programs. In such diagrams, circles of various sizes (drawn or cut out from paper) are used to represent institutions or individuals; the bigger the circle, the more important the institution or individual. Distance between circles is used to represent the degree of influence or contact between institutions or individuals. Overlapping circles indicate interactions, with the extent of overlap indicating the level of interaction.

*Additional resources for Venn diagrams:* Pretty et al. (1995) and Rietbergen-McCracken and Narayan (1998, 148).

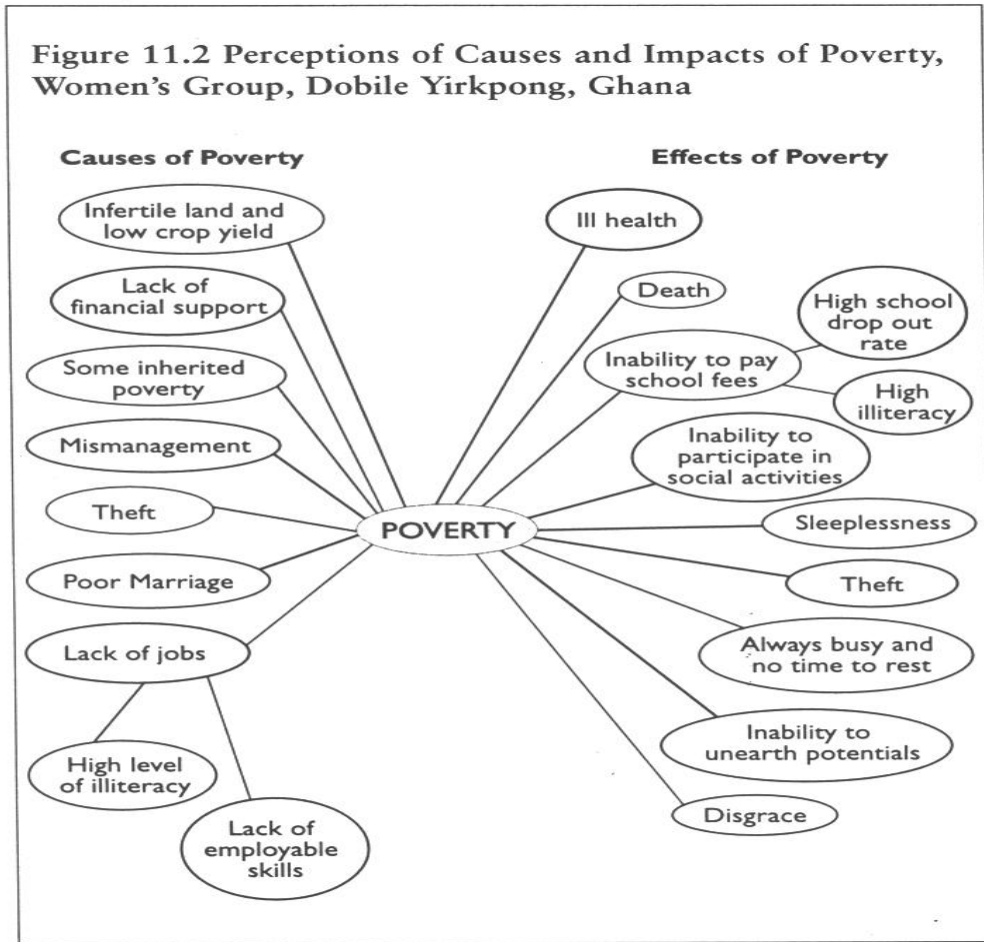
**Figure 2. Example of Venn diagram**



*Source:* Thompson and Freudenberg (1997). (The image can be downloaded from the Food and Agricultural Organization website, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/w7483e/w7483e0n.jpg>; accessed February 1996.)

*Cause-and-effect diagrams* are another effective tool for helping a group sort out how various issues are interrelated, then develop an integrated framework to solve them. A group begins the process by brainstorming on the problems that affect day-to-day life in a given community. Based on the list that they produce, the group visually lays out the cause-and-effect relations between the problems. The tool helps to elicit thoughtful discussions and can also help establish a common vantage point. It is also one of many tools that can be used to identify gender differences in well-being and social networks.

Figure 3. Example of cause-and-effect diagram



Source: Narayan et al., *Voices of the Poor*, 2000a.

## Team Preparation and Data Collection

While anthropological research is often conducted by an individual researcher, the increasing use of qualitative approaches in larger development initiatives (e.g., project preparation, poverty assessments, research and evaluation) means that teams of people are likely to be needed to conduct research.<sup>\*\*</sup> The team requirement poses special challenges for qualitative research, because a delicate balance must be struck between establishing a coherent approach to collecting and collating material and allowing team members the autonomy and discretion to pursue the idiosyncrasies of the particular settings in which they work. This section offers practical guidance for recruiting and preparing team members for these challenges, as well as strategies for organizing qualitative data.

A common maxim in research is that the quality of data analysis can only be as good as the quality of raw material. In other words, high-powered analysis cannot compensate for bad data. It is therefore vital to take time up-front to think through the research methodology; recruit, train, and retain a quality team of field staff; and ensure that all team members understand the procedures that will be followed.

Both qualitative and quantitative research demand significant resources, particularly the time of the people who participate in them. One of the primary criticisms of quantitative and, especially qualitative, research is that more data is generated than can be analyzed. This guide has accordingly been selective rather than comprehensive in recommending tools and conceptual frameworks. These tools may very well need to be pared down further when used in applied research. Researchers are thus encouraged to think through how the data will be used to improve institutions and the quality of people's lives before they design and execute a research project.

### Managing the research process

This guide suggests breaking down the research process into the following steps. Note that both the steps and their sequencing often overlap and may alter over time, depending on whether qualitative research alone or an integrated qualitative and quantitative research approach is implemented.

1. ***Get to know the local context.*** Refine your hypotheses based on all currently available data and information on the types, forms, and levels of social capital of the local communities being studied. Apply a sampling framework with geographic representation and diversity. (The sampling framework will, of course, depend on the hypotheses of the research.)
2. ***Design a detailed guide for fieldwork,*** including a realistic timetable (especially when working in remote areas) and specific documentation guidelines for all research components.

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<sup>\*\*</sup> This section was developed on the basis of Narayan and Shah (1999), Krishna and Shrader (2000), Grootaert and Narayan (2000), Dudwick et al. (2002), and Barron et al. (2004).

### **Box 9. Recruiting field staff: Language and gender challenges in Indonesia**

To generate high-quality data, considerable time and effort must be devoted to training field staff. This task can be very challenging in many poor and/or authoritarian countries, where training in technical fields (e.g., physics and engineering) is often given priority at the direct expense of fields such as anthropology and journalism (which are oriented towards asking critical questions and delving into the details of people's lives and experiences). Nevertheless, high unemployment may result in many talented people being available to do interesting work. Allocating sufficient time to find suitable field researchers, and then making a significant up-front commitment to their training, is critical.

In a large study of local-level conflict in Indonesia, the World Bank spent four months putting together a research team. A total of 11 researchers and 4 provincial coordinators were recruited for four research teams, one for each of the districts studied. Initially, recruitment involved initial over-hiring to account for the possibility of dropouts and ensure that those who remained were truly suitable for the task. A range of skills and expertise was required to build a balanced team. The first requirement was prior experience conducting qualitative fieldwork and spending extended periods of time in Indonesian villages. Other criteria included a bachelor's degree<sup>a</sup> and fluency in English (necessary for both training sessions and supervision).

While local language proficiency was not a prerequisite as such, the task manager sought to build district research teams that had members fluent in local tongue(s). For some regional teams this was easy: almost every candidate interviewed in Java was fluent in Javanese. There were many languages within each district, however, and languages were often spoken over the boundaries of two (or more) districts. Thus some regional research teams needed to include team members who spoke two or three languages. In the end, only three researchers did not speak the local language of the area in which they worked.

It was much more difficult to build gender-balanced teams. The East Java team, for example, had only one woman among five researchers. In another region, even fewer women came forward to be interviewed and the vast majority were not fully qualified. The problems of hiring women indicated the imbalanced nature of opportunities and freedoms that exist between men and women in Indonesia, as in many other countries. The lack of women team members created serious problems, given the difficulty of male researchers accessing female respondents (Barron and Madden 2003a). All-male research teams were thus encouraged to informally hire local women to help them conduct interviews, especially focus group discussions.

<sup>a</sup> In fact, many candidates had gone further in their education.

*Source:* Barron et al (2004).

3. ***Recruit qualitative study team members*** (see Box 9 for more details). Consider a range of qualifications, including educational background (for example, sociology, anthropology, psychology, and geography provide good foundations); facility with local languages; balanced gender and/or ethnic composition (needed for working with specific focus groups); familiarity with local culture, religion, and practices. Be aware that educational credentials are not always the best indicator of an effective field worker—more junior researchers can often be as or more efficient than their senior colleagues.

Use local research networks to strengthen local capacity for participatory and qualitative research, helping to build social capital in the communities and among researchers. Local researchers can also be invaluable for helping the team navigate unfamiliar language, cultural, and contextual territory. Of course, there are pros and cons to hiring team members who are from the specific communities where the research will take place. Such researchers may well understand the local context, but may be too intertwined in this context to be perceived as impartial by study participants. Orient team members by reviewing steps one and two and making revisions as necessary.

4. ***Link fieldwork to ongoing development activities and policy analysis***, helping to ensure that subsequent findings feed into action at the community and country levels and do not stand alone or go unused. Identify local policies and programs to be informed by the research, ideally in conjunction with a household survey data team. Make connections with relevant staff at various levels of government to seek input and build ownership of the research process. (Approval by local officials may also be needed to enter particular regions for research purposes.)
5. ***Train the study team in specific study topics, methods, and reporting formats***. (Such training will be different for every research team, depending on the scope and context of its work.) If possible, it is very important to train all team members together to ensure consistency and to anticipate challenges to uniform translation and application of study topics across sites. When team members do not thoroughly understand the purpose and methods of the study, they will not be able to effectively communicate these issues to stakeholders and participants in the field. It is also useful to identify in advance the range of materials that researchers should bring to the field to facilitate their qualitative work.<sup>18</sup>

Focus group research may require specific training. Moderators, for example, must be able to deploy multiple strategies to solicit the views of quieter focus group members on important topics; they must also understand how to introduce questions and follow-up queries in ways that do not bias participant responses. Note takers for group discussions must be trained to document exactly what people say, and not synthesize or approximate their statements.

6. ***Invest time and resources in the accurate translation and/or interpretation of key concepts and terminology***. Many English-language words used in social capital research do not easily translate into other languages. When possible, work with a translator early in the training process to contemplate how questions, instructions, or exercises might best be communicated. Review draft versions with the research team, asking them to translate terms back and forth as a means to ensure the consistency of terms and researcher understanding. Remember to consider regional variations, religious differences, gender issues, and age or caste sensitivities.
7. ***Establish some guiding principles for the research team***, such as:
  - a. Keep the research as simple and short as possible—do not generate data that you cannot use; do not waste people’s precious time.
  - b. Be transparent and honest with stakeholders and participants regarding research objectives and the research process.
  - c. Avoid generating unrealistic expectations. Do not create false pretenses.
  - d. Build trust between researchers and community members and other stakeholders by being open and respectful.
  - e. Do not lead respondents—it is very easy for a researcher to give subtle as well as obvious indications to respondents regarding what he or she expects to hear.

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<sup>18</sup> “While it is best to try and use locally available material like stones, seeds, empty cigarette cartons, bottle caps, etc., it is handy to carry some materials to the field, such as: seeds or beans; masking tape; large sheets of paper; rubber bands (to roll up paper); colored chalk and markers; colored cards (for Venn diagrams); scissors; small notebooks for notes; pens; pencils; eraser” (Narayan and Shah 1999, 44).

8. ***Involve all key players in designing research study indicators.*** If the information gathered by a study is intended to inform the development or reform of policies and programs, questions and indicators must be developed across groups, otherwise study findings will not be taken seriously across constituencies. For example, findings on female-headed households in Tanzania provided a perfect example of how quantitative indicators lead to one conclusion and qualitative, to another. By using both forms of data, it became clear that the reality of such households was much more nuanced: while they had better consumption, they were also more vulnerable (Narayan and Pritchett 1999).
9. ***Enable local people to serve as partners in data collection and analysis.*** Individuals from the local community will know if research results are consistent with their own experience and can alert the research team to inconsistencies if they are not. Bringing respondents into the analysis process also yields capacity-building spillovers and thus creates benefits for the community as well as the researchers. Study teams need to create a flexible and relaxed environment and enable participants to share control over the process of gathering and documenting their views and experiences. In many cases, the primary collection of information and analysis of social capital will be carried out by the participating communities and groups themselves, with members of the study team serving as facilitators. It is important to provide summaries of findings to community members in accessible formats along the way to triangulate findings and empower local actors.
10. ***Ensure that the project budget can support competent field staff.*** Staffing requirements will depend on the scale, sample size, and time frame of a research project. Regardless of the scope and logistical considerations (i.e., costs associated with travel and communication) of a qualitative study, the budget must be able to support capable researchers (see Box 10). A commitment to competent staff will safeguard against poor quality data and the potential need to verify it by returning to the field.
11. ***If qualitative methods are complemented by a household survey, use the qualitative research findings to refine the questions and methods incorporated in the survey.*** Then use an iterative process to reconfirm the objectives and findings of the quantitative data.
12. ***Immediately synthesize the information generated by a group or community into a site report*** (a detailed account of the process and data generated by a specific community), using an agreed reporting format. In many cases, it is important that study team members prepare the site report to ensure proper reporting and avoid potentially biased accounting by community members. The completed site report should then be disseminated back to the community to verify study findings and support local development processes. If the research incorporates a household survey, site reports should be compared with survey findings at each site.

### Box 10. Managing budgets and setting priorities

Although budgets for social analysis differ dramatically from project to project, good qualitative research can be done on small or large budgets. Studies on the scale of the Indonesia local conflict research can have budgets up to US\$1 million, while small-scale studies like one in the Kyrgyz Republic can be carried out for US\$20,000. The cost of the latter was so low because the study piggybacked on another World Bank study, allowing researchers to train the field team for both studies together and thereby halve the required time and cost.

The primary logistical constraint to solid qualitative research is time, which also means money. Training researchers, covering their expenses in the field, and paying their salaries can quickly add up. Careful attention must therefore be given to preparing and managing the budget for a research study. Budgets depend on the type of questions being asked, the sample size, and the time frame. If the task is to primarily help quantitative survey designers construct more refined and context-specific questions (e.g., for a household poverty questionnaire), then a relatively small team can suffice. If the issue is broader (e.g., vulnerability), more difficult to define and measure (e.g., empowerment), or likely to vary across communities (e.g., rules that shape gender relations), then a larger team and longer time frame will likely be needed.

Within the constraints of the budget, task managers should give the highest priority to working with competent and experienced field researchers. The cost-benefit analysis should take into account that better and more complete data may reduce project costs over the long term. When setting priorities, information that will yield the most actionable findings should also be considered, together with who will be using the findings. Certain actors are likelier to act on findings than others—some may have the authority, but not the political will, and vice versa.

Using qualitative methods may add to the costs of a project assessment, but such research can often be combined with ongoing studies of related topics (e.g., gender, environmental sustainability, or poverty). The additional investment may even help avoid costly mistakes in project implementation.

13. *Use available quantitative data (primary or secondary) to triangulate the research findings* and produce a report that consolidates qualitative findings across sites. Unbundle assumptions and inconsistencies.
14. *Generate a synthesis document that explains the research findings* (from both the household survey and the qualitative data, if an integrated study) *and draws implications for various development actors regarding policy and program design*. This document should be shared with authorities that control local projects and policies, as well as with local communities, media, donors, and other interested parties.
15. *Adopt a strong post-research dissemination effort*. Too much good research sits on shelves in academic institutions. Policy makers need documents and briefings that highlight relevant results and offer clear policy recommendations. Consider holding a series of public events to discuss the research findings and implications with various constituencies. This process will help sustain the partnership between researchers and community participants by giving something valuable back to the communities.

## Managing the Logistics of Qualitative Research

The labor-intensive nature of qualitative research, combined with the requirement of spending lengthy periods of time in poor and often isolated communities, creates logistical challenges for which (large) development organizations may not be well prepared. Task managers need to be aware of the following five key issues:

1. ***Cover the costs of field staff with a per diem.*** It is unlikely that field staff will receive any form of documentation (i.e., receipts) for transport, accommodation, food, and incidental expenses in the settings in which they will work. Team leaders report that enormous amounts of time and effort have been wasted trying to satisfy the insistence of urban administrators on receiving receipts for (20-cent) taxi rides and (30-cent) meals—expenses that are largely trivial for the organization, but add up for local researchers. We therefore recommend setting an appropriate per diem rate for local field staff to cover all expenses.
2. ***Communicate with field staff.*** This is an important consideration, given the health and safety risks of working in poor and/or isolated communities, the need to share timely information, and the likelihood that staff may be dispersed across a wide geographical area. Again, valuable time and effort can be lost without an effective and inexpensive communication system. Mobile and/or satellite phones may also be needed to maintain communication between staff in the field and their managers. In the Indonesia local conflict project, three pairs of researchers were dispersed across two distant provinces, but local managers pioneered the use of text messaging to maintain real-time communications with them; in conjunction with email, even Washington-based staff could reach them in minutes. Text messaging is essentially without cost (and is rapidly becoming ubiquitous among youth).
3. ***Manage the data.*** All aspects of qualitative analysis necessarily require deep immersion in the raw research materials. Doing this well depends on whether the project has implemented an accessible data management system—comprised of thorough records of observations, interview material, field notes, etc.—that enables sources to be checked and rechecked as the analysis unfolds. Field researchers must thus ensure that their conversations and observations are properly recorded in standardized formats. Apart from the technical challenge of ensuring coherence in their data collection procedures, the research team must give proper attention to storing, protecting, and transporting data collected in the field, most of which is likely to be in hard copy (as opposed to electronic) form. Even modest qualitative research projects can generate hundreds of pages of text. A data management system that can integrate these diverse materials and make them easily accessible to analysts is therefore essential. Software packages such as the ‘N6’ or ‘Envivo’,<sup>19</sup> programs are specifically designed to store and manage text, as opposed to the numbers typical of quantitative research.
4. ***Assign responsibility for ultimate ownership and housing of data.*** Observations, interviews, and other material gleaned from qualitative research are intellectual property and need to be protected accordingly. Given that some of this data may be politically sensitive and/or personally incriminating, it is important that all parties are clear from the outset (and, if

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<sup>19</sup> This software (or an earlier version) was used in, among other studies, Narayan (2000) and Gibson and Woolcock (2005).



necessary, have signed relevant written agreements) on who has the ultimate legal responsibility for the data, where it will be housed, and who can have access to it.

5. ***Ensure the confidentiality of respondents and their location.*** Policies should be established regarding when, how, and at what level (region, district, or village) to change names and places to protect sources. At the same time, researchers need to have clear protocols in place in the event that the accuracy of sources needs to be checked at a later time, ensuring that third parties who access the data cannot compromise the anonymity of respondents.

#### **Box 11. Confidentiality issues**

Ethical standards require researchers to avoid putting a participant in any situation that poses a ***risk of physical or psychological harm***. Two principles are applied to help protect the privacy of research participants: ***confidentiality*** (study participants are assured that identifying information will not be made available to anyone not directly involved in the study) and ***anonymity*** (participants remain anonymous throughout the study). Both principles are important, especially when community-level research is conducted at the village level, where local villages or villagers might be recognized, causing harm to individuals or groups.

These issues become especially salient where formal disclosure and dissemination rules require that the data collected be made available to the general public, or at least the research community. In these cases, it is vital that the names of respondents and the places where data is collected are modified to protect the anonymity of respondents.

## Analyzing Qualitative Data

Most of the discussion to this point has centered on the uses and relative strengths of qualitative methods,<sup>20</sup> but it is also important to consider how to analyze qualitative data. This type of data is characteristically textual (i.e., it is expressed in words and images, as opposed to numbers) and draws from such sources as interviews, observations, group discussions, media reports, cultural artifacts (e.g., music, art, ceremonies), and historical documents (e.g., minutes of meetings, legal material).

Analysis of qualitative data is primarily an inductive, as opposed to deductive, process,<sup>21</sup> meaning that the researcher endeavors to discern patterns in the data rather than formally test pre-determined hypotheses. The end result is typically a detailed account of particular phenomena (known as a “thick description”), a list of propositions, or the construction of a typology indicating how one set of variables is related to one another. A qualitative study on whether and how people move out of poverty might, for example, incorporate detailed narratives of the strategies used and obstacles encountered by the poor in their attempts to “move up” the economic ladder, perhaps by comparing people who are poor to different degrees or in different

<sup>20</sup> Social science policy research distinguishes between methods and data, the former referring to tools and techniques, the latter to the types of raw material to which they give rise (Hentschel 1999). There are accordingly quantitative and qualitative methods, just as there are quantitative and qualitative data. Writers such as Ragin (1994) suggest that comparative case study approaches (for example, George and Bennett 2005) constitute a distinctive third category of social science research methods.

<sup>21</sup> Analyzing quantitative data is a major subject in its own right and cannot be addressed in detail in this paper. For a more extensive discussion of the topic, see the classic text on qualitative research methods by Lofland and Lofland (1995).

ways in different places. This analysis would then develop an integrated framework to show how the most salient variables were related to one another (e.g., Krishna 2006). The objective throughout would be to document how historical and context-specific processes shape both the social structures and individual/group behaviors in and through which poverty is encountered, reproduced, resisted, and (sometimes) overcome.

As noted earlier, the analytic findings generated by qualitative research can also inform the design of a quantitative survey. Qualitative research can also verify and triangulate quantitative data.<sup>22</sup> Counterintuitive quantitative conclusions can, for example, often be illuminated by probing with open-ended questions. Such an approach in Nigeria helped explain how certain community organizations were viewed as being weak and ineffective despite having strong alliances and/or networks. According to the Nigerian perspective, an organization that needs alliances is not strong enough to stand on its own. This is a very different interpretation than one might find in the United States, for example, where networking and political alliances are highly regarded.

The very nature of qualitative data means that analysis of such data must uphold general principles, rather than follow rigid technical rules. It is important to remember that what may seem quite clear once an analysis is complete was largely unknown or obscure before a study began. Good qualitative research is in many respects the art and science of making legible certain processes (and the relationships between them) that are generally hidden or unfamiliar. Social capital, which is something at once intimately familiar and possibly subconscious to the insider and foreign to the outsider, is thus eminently suited to detailed qualitative data analysis.

### **Identifying emerging themes and typologies**

Going from thousands of pages of text to a finite number of plausible propositions and/or variables framed in a coherent typology is an iterative process, one that requires ever-greater analytical refinements, frequent review of the primary material, and, sometimes, even visits back to the field.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, qualitative data is often collected sequentially, with an initial round of investigation giving rise to new issues, questions, and approaches, meaning that the data set itself is frequently a work-in-progress.

Qualitative analysis typically proceeds in a sequence of steps. Before researcher team can identify themes and typologies, they must first code the data, that is, sort it into a finite number of categories (which themselves emerge from the data). These categories eventually become the key variables used to explain similarities and variations within the data. Lofland and Lofland (1995) recommend that researchers maintain four different types of codes: housekeeping (notes on everyday events, people, and organizations in the setting being analyzed), analytic (emerging themes in the data, including coding single items in numerous ways), fieldwork (notes on

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<sup>22</sup> Certain qualitative tools actually operate in the nexus between quantitative and qualitative methods. Such participatory, open-ended research methods as ranking and scoring (using done with focus groups) can, for example, yield numerical data that can be analyzed and aggregated. (See Narayan 2000, Chapter 10).

<sup>23</sup> The recent emergence of software for qualitative data analysis (e.g., N6 and Envivo) has enabled the analytic process to be carried out on a larger scale, but the underlying principles of analysis remain the same. Computer technology should be regarded as a complement to, not a substitute for, detailed qualitative data analysis. In fact, significant analysis by researchers is required to make good use of these software packages.

procedures pertaining to data collection and preliminary analysis), and chronological (notes on the order in which events occurred and/or data was collected).

Collectively, these codes enable a researcher to manage a complex process of data analysis that becomes more refined over time, moving iteratively from general to more specific refinements of key variables and the relationships between them. The codes themselves become more focused as the analysis proceeds, their veracity justified by their capacity to explain a wider array of the data. As the analysis unfolds, “categories within the selected codes are elaborated. Other codes are collapsed and yet others are dropped.” Through this process, “...some codes begin to assume the status of overarching ideas or propositions that will occupy a prominent or central place in the analysis” (Lofland and Lofland 1995, 192–93).

One of the analytical tasks that the qualitative researcher might want to undertake is a rank ordering of community members along a range of dimensions, both for purposes of comparison and to understand how particular communities are stratified. While certain of these dimensions may be readily observable (e.g., wealth) and measurable through household surveys and other instruments,<sup>24</sup> other salient dimensions, such as connections to influential political leaders or health status, might not. Yet these latter dimensions may exert considerable influence over people’s identities, aspirations, and opportunities.

An example of these processes can be seen in a recent World Bank study of local conflict in rural Indonesia (Barron, Smith, and Woolcock 2005; see Box 10). The study began with some general hypotheses of the causes, nature, and extent of these conflicts, based on the existing literature and first-hand field experiences. However, the research relied primarily on qualitative data to provide a more precise and analytically rich account of the conditions under which given episodes of conflict were either peacefully resolved, became mired in stalemate, or escalated into violence. After conducting over 800 interviews, 100 focus group discussions, and 69 case studies of local conflict, the team of lead researchers faced the challenge of analyzing over 10,000 pages of text to discern useful patterns.

To make sense of this much material, the team collectively familiarized itself with the data (they had also been directly involved in supervising its collection). The team then retreated for a period of six days to discern the key themes in the data. Their first task entailed mapping out a finite set of pathways down which particular conflicts could go; from there, the challenge was to identify the conditions under which conflicts took one path rather than another. There were many false starts; variables on the table after three days of discussion and debate were progressively discarded as agreement gradually emerged on three central variables, identified as the “rules of the game,” “dynamics of difference,” and “efficacy of intermediaries” (Barron, Smith and Woolcock, 2004).

Each of the three general variables was then broken down into three or four component variables. For example, the rules of the game variable was sub-divided into the “compatibility of different rules systems,” the “coherence of meta-rules” (i.e., rules that mediate otherwise incompatible rules systems, such as those that govern differences between state and customary law with respect to, say, inheritance), and the enforceability of both formal and informal rules. According

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<sup>24</sup> In rural settings, qualitative researchers sometimes use techniques such as “wealth ranking” exercises (conducted as part of, say, a Participatory Rural Appraisal) to help villagers document the spatial distribution of wealth.

to the qualitative data, local conflicts were most likely to escalate in environments characterized by low compatibility between different rules systems, weakly coherent meta-rules, and lack of enforcement of both formal and informal rules.

### **Triangulation and verification**

The inherently imprecise nature of the issues being studied in social science research, and the inability of researchers (in all but the rarest of circumstances) to “control” neatly for other factors that may influence research outcomes, means that researchers have a strong ethical and empirical obligation to verify the accuracy of their claims. This is done in two broad ways. The first is to conduct data analysis using variations on the same method to ensure that a given result is not an idiosyncrasy associated with a specific methodological choice; the second is to subject the issue to two (or more) entirely different methodological perspectives altogether, to see whether (and if so, how) the very framing of the question and corresponding selection of research techniques (and their attendant assumptions) drive the results. An example of the former is the use of key-informant interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation techniques to study rural poverty in Kyrgyz Republic (Kuehnast and Dudwick 2004); an example of the latter is a study of slum dwellers in Delhi (Jha, Rao, and Woolcock, 2005), where both qualitative and quantitative methods were used.

As noted earlier, this use of different methods to confirm research results is referred to as “triangulation.” The basic idea is to use the strengths of one methodological approach to compensate for the weaknesses of the other (see Rao and Woolcock 2003). When different approaches yield broadly similar findings, the researcher can be more confident that those findings are indeed correct. The more interesting—if more time-consuming and sometimes problematic—outcome occurs when different methods yield *different* results, raising the obvious challenge of how to correct or resolve these differences. Similarly, the *absence* of evidence gleaned from a different methodological perspective would cast doubt on the conclusions drawn from a single approach.

Analysis is also affected by the quality of triangulation done in the field. The better the local researchers disentangle and triangulate the findings (using who, what, why, where, and when questions to solicit the reasoning behind certain responses), the more fully they can explain their data to the central research team. This nuanced understanding facilitates the emergence of themes and typologies and saves time that might otherwise be devoted to going back and checking findings.

Where results differ between the two methods and no serious technical or interpretative errors have been made, the usual response is either to conduct additional research or revisit the original theoretical or conceptual framework that informed the study design. In certain instances it may well be that different methods yield different results that are unresolvable (e.g., short-run economic growth may be both good and bad for the poor, with survey results stressing the upside and key-informant interviews, the downside; Kanbur 2001), in which case it should be reported as such. The researcher can then leave discerning readers to make their own judgment as to which set of results he or she finds the most plausible. However, the more rigorous approach is usually to conclude that the problem lies at the theoretical level. That is, prior to the study being

conducted, the prevailing wisdom assumed—incorrectly it would appear—that a relatively straightforward relationship existed between two sets of variables.

## **Conclusion**

As has been observed throughout this guide, qualitative research improves the reliability and validity of existing quantitative instruments, while making its own distinctive empirical contributions to policy and project design. Mixed-method research is extremely useful for revealing how people and households use relationships and social networks for survival and/or mobility. Modules on social networks that are incorporated into household surveys can, for example, generate crucial data for the design of national poverty reduction strategies. Studies of social networks can, moreover, uncover the need for local initiatives in good governance, social accountability, and conflict management.

Qualitative social capital research provides host countries and development agencies alike with insight into the tangible reality behind quantitative survey numbers. Country officials can use these findings to design more tailored, practical poverty reduction policies, while development agencies can integrate the use of social networks into development policies and interventions. Finally, qualitative methods make critical contributions to impact evaluation and project monitoring by highlighting the way in which interventions help or hinder the growth of social capital.

This paper and its earlier companion publication (Grootaert et al. 2004) were written with the express purpose of encouraging task managers to integrate qualitative and quantitative methods in operational work. Equally important, the two papers seek to encourage development agency staff and host country officials to participate in the design and use of social capital research.

In the end, social capital research will inform projects and policies most effectively when local capacity exists to analyze and act upon such information. Development agencies need to encourage research subjects to own and use the information obtained from them, possibly allowing social capital research to contribute to actually building social capital itself. Achieving this goal requires a two-pronged effort of building local capacity and disseminating research findings. Local researchers need assistance to develop the skills and experience to conduct and use social capital research over the long term. The findings of such research must, moreover, be distributed as widely as possible at the local level to encourage local ownership and collective action.

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