

Abstract

We provide an overview of some practical guidelines for using both qualitative and quantitative methods to assess social capital in low income countries. Drawing on two longer and more detailed source documents, we use a six-dimension conceptual framework to show how a more complete picture of the nature and extent of social relations in poor communities can be discerned. Far from being the 'final word' on social capital assessment, these guidelines serve rather to distil lessons from research conducted thus far at the World Bank (and elsewhere), and provide a broad platform on which subsequent research can draw and, in turn, contribute. It is stressed that social capital's salience and manifestations, across all dimensions, is often highly context dependent, and that all researchers need to do the hard work of adapting these guidelines to best suit the political, cultural and historical realities of the communities in which they are engaged.

Keywords: social capital, low income, qualitative, quantitative, networks, solidarity, information, communication, cooperation, social cohesion, inclusion

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This paper provides a brief overview of—while drawing extensively on and seeking to partially integrate—work originally presented in Grootaert *et al* (2004), which developed a quantitative survey instrument of social capital, and Dudwick *et al* (2006), which focused on qualitative tools for assessing social capital in context. Those interested in the details of these respective methodological approaches are advised to consult the original source documents. Our indebtedness to our respective colleagues on these projects is duly acknowledged. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors alone, and should not be attributed to the World Bank or the University of Manchester.