

## **Abstract**

Poverty is usually associated with powerlessness, vulnerability and above all failure of aspirations. Poor people might not be able to achieve their capabilities, but this does not mean that they do not have aspirations they wish to fulfil. The concept of aspirations has been explored in the fields of economics, anthropology, psychology and philosophy, but not extensively in development studies. The aim of the paper is to present a conceptual framework for analysing aspirations based on the capability approach and to apply a new methodology to articulate these aspirations. Using Egypt as a case study, the voices of the poor reveal the interrelationships between failure of aspirations, which not only leads to a downward spiral, but also to an intergenerational transfer of aspirations' failure. The paper concludes that identifying and addressing the causal relationship between poverty, aspirations and wellbeing could be the starting point for effective and more relevant development policies that help poor people to achieve their aspired but unfulfilled capabilities.

**Keywords:** aspirations, poverty, wellbeing

**Solava Ibrahim** is Research Fellow at the Brooks World Poverty Institute, The University of Manchester, UK.