Defining Well-being through the Voices of the Poor:
An Egyptian Perspective

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Do Development Policies Correspond to the *actual* Well-being Perceptions of the Poor, i.e. to what They *Value and have Reason to Value*?

Not Really?!

The Explanatory Power of

Development Theories

should be **Challenged** and the

Relevance of Development Policies

Should be **Enhanced**

through the **Voices of the Poor**

Aims of the Paper

1. Integrating People's Voices into Development Analysis

2. Presenting a Methodology on how these Voices can be articulated

3. Demonstrating how Integrating Voices can/should lead to Different Development Policies:

    - The Case of Education in Egypt

Outline

- **Conceptual Framework:**

  - *Why are People's Voices Important?*

  - ⇒ Adopting a People-Centered View of Development

- **Methodology:**

  - *How can the Voices be Articulated?*

  - ⇒ Identifying 'What the Poor Value and have Reason to Value'

- **Policy Implications:**

  - *How Can Policies be designed differently to account for the Poor's Voices?*

  - => Linking macro-trends with micro-analysis

Adopting the Capability Approach as Conceptual Framework for Well-being Assessment

Why
Capability Approach as Conceptual Framework?

- Freedom-Centred View of Well-being

- Importance of Culture

- Interpersonal Variations

- Broadening the Informational Space

- Acknowledging the Diverse Human Abilities to convert resources into valuable achievements

- Democratic Processes and Public Discussions

Why are People's Voices Important?

Why Articulate Voices of the Poor?

1. Identify which choices are valued by the Poor

2. Point out Structural Impediments to the Expansion of their Human Choices

3. Take the 'Ideas of the Poor' seriously

4. Learn from Local Knowledge

5. Enhance the relevance of Development theory and practice

⇒ *'A Person who is not Poor who pronounces on what matters to those who are Poor is in a Trap'* (Chambers, 1997, 163)

How Can Voices be Articulated?

How to Articulate Voices?

1. Using **Questionnaires and In-depth Interviews** to explore people's perceptions of well-being: (Clark, 2002; Anand and Van Hees 2006; Anand, Hunter and Smith, 2005; Alkire 2002; Uyan-Semerci 2007)

2. Using **Life Histories** to track Chronic Poverty, Poverty Traps and Dynamics of Poverty: CPRC's emphasis on the importance of the 'human face of poverty dynamics'

3. **World Bank volumes**: Voices of the Poor and Moving out of Poverty

⇒ **The need for 'grounded' data to understand the <u>dynamics of poverty</u>**

The difficulty in collecting and analyzing this data is no longer an acceptable excuse for ignoring the Poor's Voices!

New Methodological Tool for a Grounded Exploration of the Poor's Well-being

Exploring Different *Aspects* of Well-being Dimensions

1. *Is this dimension valued?*

2. *Why is this dimension valued?*

3. *Has this dimension been achieved?*

4. *Why has/has not this dimension been successfully achieved?*

Articulating Voices on Different Well-being Dimensions

➤ <u>General Well-being</u>: Life Satisfaction, Elements of a Good Life, Poor's Problems, Unfulfilled "Capabilities"

➤ <u>Material Well-being</u>: Income, Education, Employment, Health, Housing, Transportation, Safety

➤ <u>Social Well-being</u>: Social respect and Fair Treatment, Family and Friends, Communal trust, Relationship with formal institutions (the state, NGOs and religious organizations), Political freedom

➤ <u>Mental Well-being</u>: Leisure and Free Time, Life Planning, Fears and Worries.

➤ <u>Missing Dimensions:</u> Completing any missing Dimensions of Well-being through the Voices of the Poor

Applying the New Methodological Tool

- Two Fieldwork Sites:
  - ☐ Manshiet Nasser: Poorest Urban Slum in Cairo
  - ☐ Menia: Rural Villages in Upper Egypt

- Sampling:
  - ☐ Stratified Random Sampling: Age and Gender
  - ☐ Snowballing

Poor's Perceptions of Well-being: An Egyptian Perspective

Selected Results

What do the Poor Value?

Elements of a Good Life

Belief in God	23.8
Income	15.0
Housing	10.0
Peace of Mind/Satisfaction	8.8
Jobs	7.5
Happy Family	7.5
Children	6.3
Good Health	3.8
Good Partner	3.8
Education	3.8
Safe Surrounding (local and national)	3.8
Social Relations/Engagement	2.5
Good Personal Traits	2.5
Food	1.3
Total	100.0

Do the Poor's Perceptions of Well-being differ across Societies and Regions?

Comparing Elements of a Good Life: Egypt vs. South Africa

Elements of a Good Life (My General list)	Elements of a Good Life (Clark, 2002, 172)
1. Income	1. Jobs
2. Belief in God	2. Housing
3. Jobs	3. Education
4. Happy Family	4. Income
5. Housing	5. Good Family
6. Social Engagement/Relations/ Peace of Mind/Satisfaction	6. Living a religious/Christian life

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What did the Poor wish to Achieve, but Couldn't?

Unfulfilled Capabilities of the Poor:

Capturing the Counterfactual!

1. **Job:** Finding a Job/ Working in a Satisfactory Job

2. **Education:** Continuing Education/Studying their preferred subjects

3. **Income:** Having sufficient Income/ Asset Ownership

4. **Marriage:** Getting married/being happily married//**Housing:** living in a comfortable/independent house/ **Children's Capabilities**: fulfilling the children's needs and dreams

5. **Living in Better Surrounding** (social and physical)

6. **Communal Role:** having an active communal role/ **Practicing one's hobbies**

7. **Fulfilling Religious Duties**

8. **Traveling Abroad**

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Policy Implications:

How does the articulation of *Voices* lead to **Different Development** *Policies*?

A Tale of Two Analyses: Macro-Trends vs. Micro-Voices

The Case of Education in Egypt

Education Macro-Trends in Egypt

- *Progress* in Literacy and School Enrolment Rates
- But!
  - ☐ Still 30% illiteracy rates
  - ☐ Almost half of women (42.7%) are still illiterate

Illiteracy and School Enrolment Rates - the Macro-Perspective

Year	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006
Literacy Rate% (15+)	46.7	48.8	52.3	55.5	57.7	62.0	69.4	65.7	69.5
Basic and Secondary Education Enrollment Ratio	81.4	81.9	85.6	80.9	80.7	81.1	85.8	90.9	89.4

Source: Egypt NHDR, 2008 p. 294; Egypt NHDR, 2005 p.204; Egypt NHDR 2004, p. 20

Does this 'progress' in Macro-Trends reflect a *Real* and *Substantial* Improvement in People's capability to be Educated?

Articulating Voices on Education

Capability

1. Do you value Education?
2. Why do you value Education?

Functioning

3. Have you succeeded in attaining those years of education that enabled you to achieve your goals in life?

Conversion Factors

4. Why have/haven't you succeeded in achieving them?

Valuing Education

- ## In both locations **Education was Valued:**
  - 92.5% in Manshiet Nasser (urban slum) and 95% in Menia (rural Upper Egypt)
- ## Slight difference in Education Valuation between Gender Groups:
  - Women valued education slightly more than men
  - 97.6% of the women vs. 89.7% of the men
- ## Education valued for **Instrumental Reasons**: accessing jobs, social acceptability, social mobility, fulfilling family responsibilities and religious duties etc..
- ## Education valued for **Intrinsic Reasons:** road to knowledge, necessity of life and one of the basic human rights
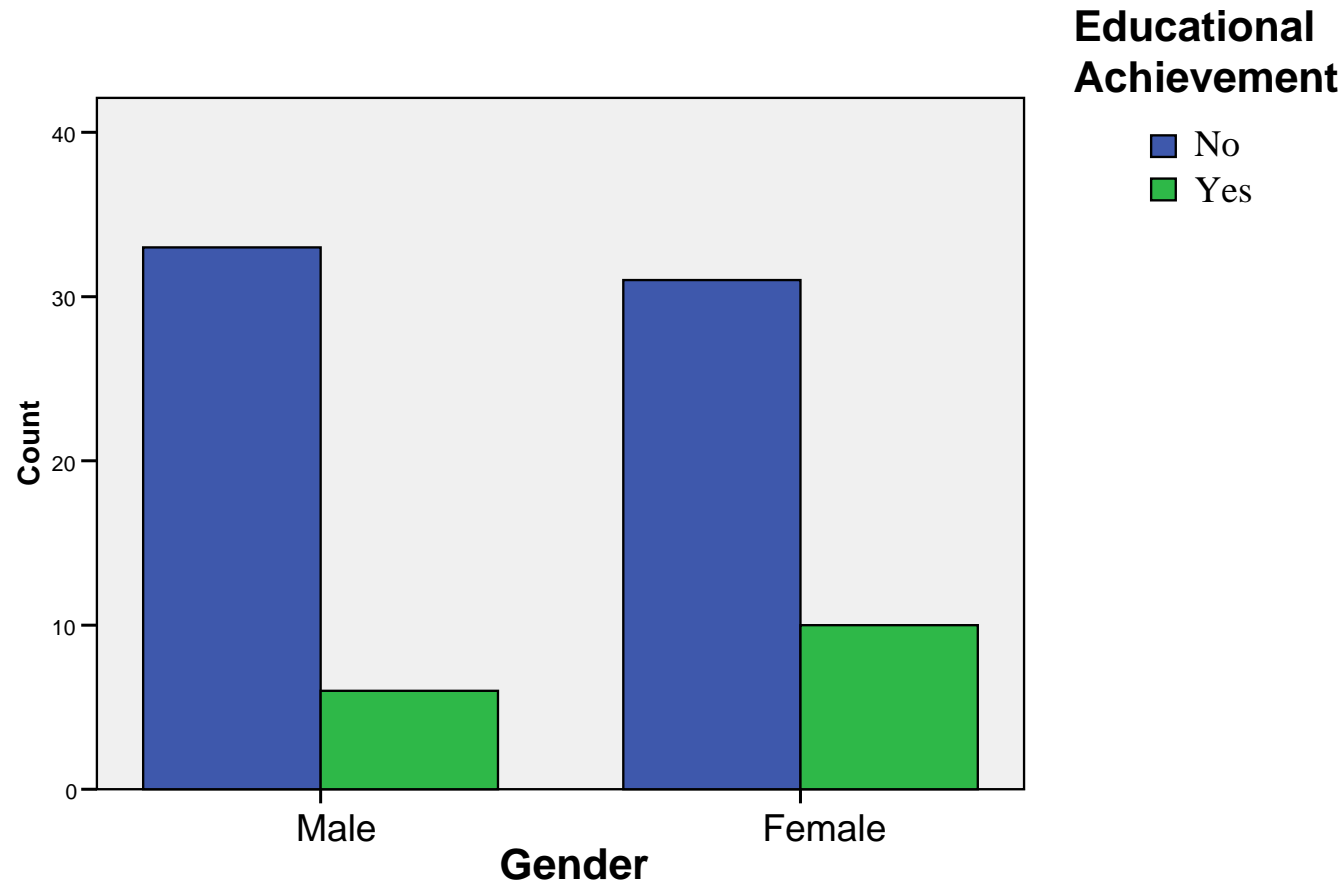
If the Poor Valued Education, did they actually *Succeed* in Achieving their aspired Educational Capabilities?
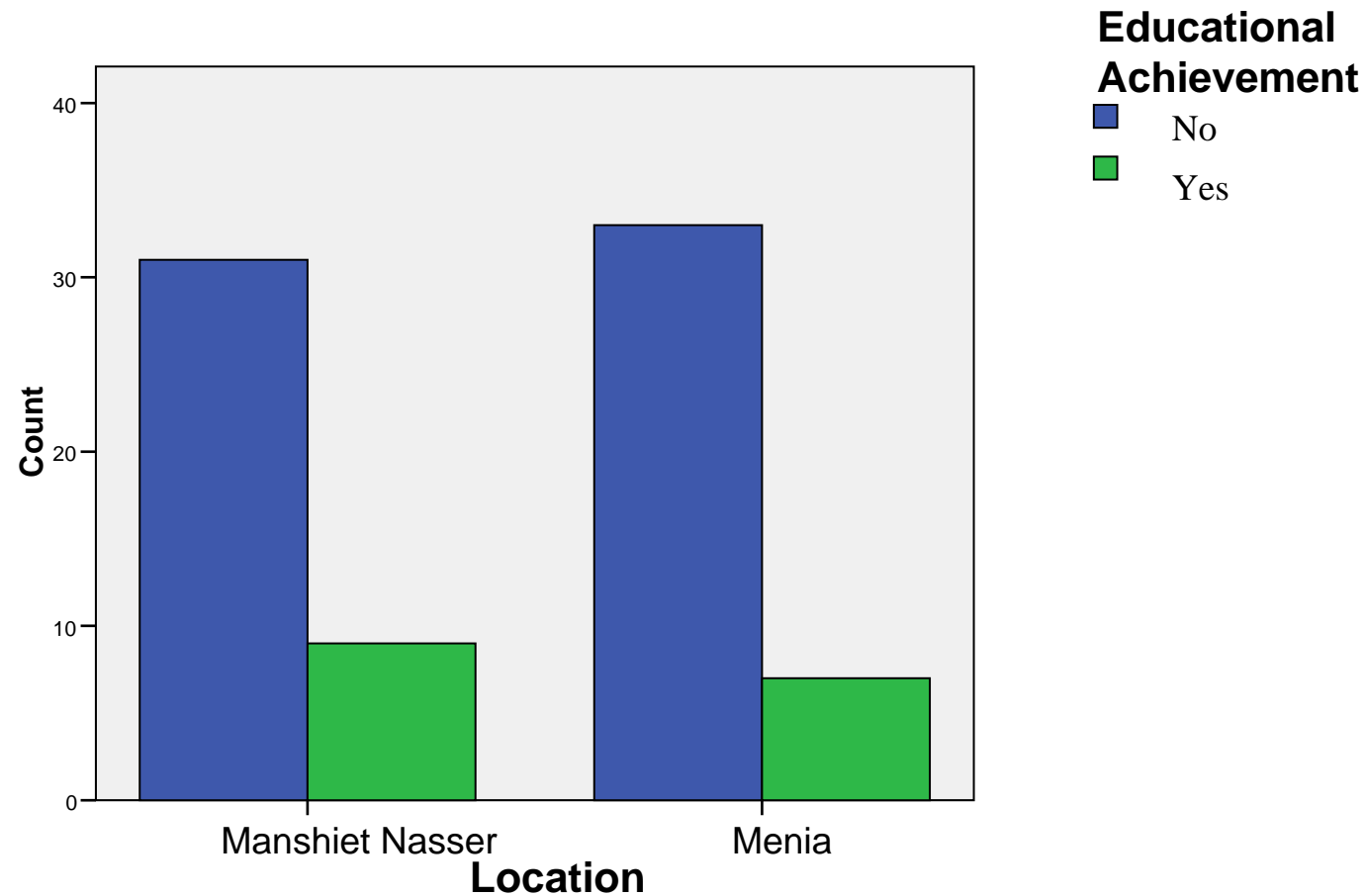
Valuing Education but Failing to Achieve it!
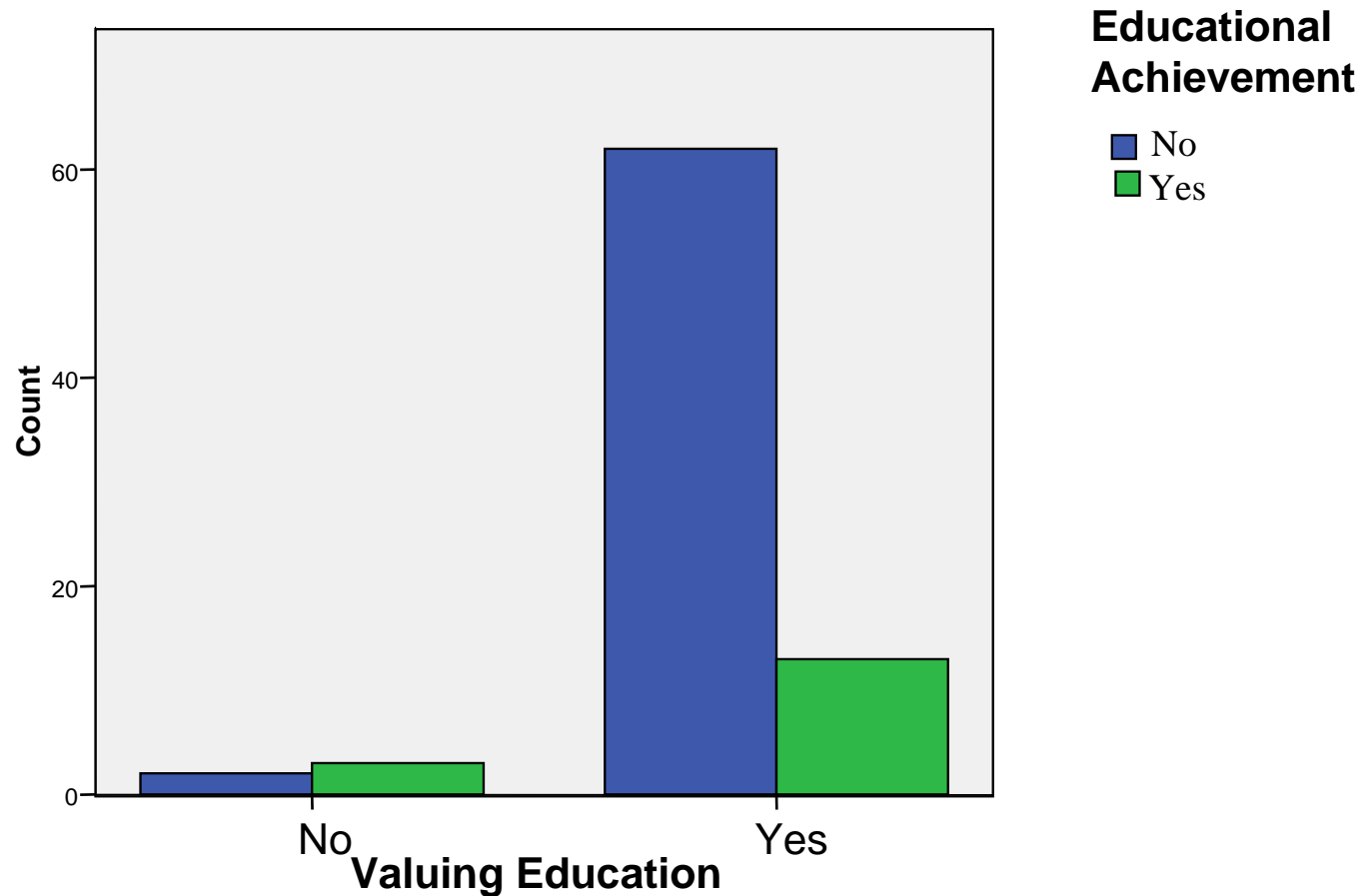
Although Enrolment and Literacy Rates increased, the Poor are <u>still</u> suffering from Deprivation in Education

Despite their Higher Literacy Rates, Men feel *more* educationally deprived than women!

Higher *Rural* Deprivation in Education

Confirming Macro-Data

Using *Voices* For Better *Policies*:

Identifying Structural Impediments to Educational Achievement

Why did the **Poor** *fail* to achieve their aspired educational capabilities?

Structural Impediments to Achieving Education

- **Financial reasons:**
  - ☐ rising educational costs lead to school drop outs or child labour

- **Health problems:**
  - ☐ affecting school performance and grades

- **Irrelevant Education**: studying subjects they did not like because:
  - ☐ their grades
  - ☐ the high costs of private lessons
  - ☐ making market-driven choices of subject to find a job, but not fulfil their aspirations.

Structural Impediments to Achieving Education

- **Social Constraints:**
  - ☐ parents preferred to educate their male children
  - ☐ Refusal of girl moving to nearby governorates
  - ☐ Girls getting married or engaged and hence dropping out

- **The Nature of the Educational System:**
  - ☐ Mismatch between education and job market
  - ☐ mistreatment by teachers
  - ☐ rising educational costs
  - ☐ low benefits from education

It is not enough to identify macro-trends, more importantly is to understand <u>why</u> these trends take place and what do they <u>mean</u> for people's lives.

Conclusion

Only by allowing the 'Voices of the Poor' to <u>Guide</u> Policymakers can Poverty Reduction Strategies be truly <u>Grounded</u> and <u>Effective</u>

But!

It is <u>not</u> enough to listen to these Voices, more importantly is that the Voices have a <u>*real*</u> effect on policymaking

Thank You

Questions
or
Comments ?