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# *The Political Economy of Targeting*<sup>\*</sup>

*Amartya Sen*

The use of the term “targeting” in eradicating poverty is based on an analogy—a target is something fired at. It is not altogether clear whether it is an appropriate analogy. The problem is not so much that the word “target” has combative association. This it does of course have, and the relationship it implies certainly seems more adversarial than supportive. But it is possible to change the association of ideas, and in fact, to some extent, the usage has already shifted in a permissive direction. The more serious problem lies elsewhere—in the fact that the analogy of a target does not at all suggest that the recipient is an active person, functioning on her own, acting and doing things. The image is one of a passive receiver rather than of an active agent.

To see the objects of targeting as *patients* rather than as *agents* can undermine the exercise of poverty removal in many different ways. The people affected by such policies can be very active agents indeed, rather than languid recipients waiting for their handouts. Not to focus on the fact that they think, choose, act, and respond is to miss something terribly crucial to the entire exercise. This is not just a terminological problem. The approach of what is called targeting often has this substantive feature of taking a passive view of the beneficiaries, and this can be a major source of allocational distortion.<sup>1</sup> There is something to be gained from taking, instead, a more activity-centered view of poverty removal.

Let us begin with the central case—the core argument—in favor of targeting. The theoretical point in favor of targeting in antipoverty policy is clear enough: the more accurate a subsidy in fact is in reaching the poor, the less the wastage, and the less it costs to achieve the desired objective. It is a matter of cost-effectiveness in securing a particular benefit. Or, to see it another way, it is one of maximizing the poverty-

<sup>\*</sup>The author is grateful to Dominique van de Walle and Kim Nead for their very helpful comments and suggestions.

removal benefits accruing from a given burden of cost. If antipoverty policy is to alleviate poverty most effectively, then—on this argument—it is reasonable to make sure that the subsidies reach the poor and *only* the poor. So, the argument concludes, be firm and aim at just that.

If the so-called targets were all identifiable and unreacting, that would be the end of the matter—we could converge on a fine strategy whose merit we would all accept. Some of the resonant appeals to the case for more targeting give one the haunting feeling that this is indeed the way the problem of poverty removal is seen by some advocates of no-nonsense targeting. The nature of the real problem of poverty removal differs from it precisely because the people involved act and react and fret and run in response to the policies aimed at poverty removal.

How so? We can begin with trying to distinguish between the different types of actions and reactions of which any poverty-removal policy has to take note.

### **Response and Social Costs**

That targeting has many direct and indirect costs has been extensively recognized in the literature.<sup>2</sup> It is useful, however, to separate out—and distinguish between—the ways in which such costs can arise and to see how each of these distinct reasons relates to particular acts and responses of the people involved in poverty-alleviation programs.

#### *Informational Distortion*

If the subsidy is aimed at the poor who are identified by some specified criterion of being counted as poor, those who would not satisfy that criterion could nevertheless pretend that they do by providing inaccurate information. This is a practice hallowed by tradition and use, and I need not dwell on this well-understood phenomenon.

But it might be asked, how could targeting *even with* informational distortion possibly be worse than no targeting at all? Some would no doubt cheat and will not be caught, but others would not cheat, and surely this is still a better *overall* result—taking the rough with the smooth—than no targeting at all and providing the subsidy to everyone.

The picture is, however, more complex than that. Some would object—not without reason—to having a system that rewards cheating and penalizes honesty. No less important, any policing system that tries to catch the cheats would make mistakes, leave out some bona fide cases, and discourage some who do qualify from applying for the benefits to which they are entitled. Given the asymmetry of information, it is not possible to eliminate cheating without putting some of the

honest beneficiaries at considerable risk (on the general problems underlying asymmetric information, see Akerlof 1984). In trying to prevent the type II error of including the nonpoor among the poor, some type I errors of not including some real poor among the listed poor would undoubtedly occur.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Incentive Distortion*

Informational distortion cooks the books but does not, on its own, change the underlying real economic situation. But targeted subsidies can also affect people's economic behavior. For example, the prospect of losing the subsidy if one were to earn too much can be a deterrent to economic activities. It could be open to question as to how substantial the incentive distortions are in any particular case, but it would be natural to expect that there would be *some* significant distorting shifts if the qualification for the subsidy is based on a variable (such as income) that is freely adjustable through changing one's economic behavior. The *social* costs of behavioral shifts would include inter alia the net loss of the fruits of economic activities forgone as well as the value of the changes in labor supply (some underlying issues in assessing changes in labor supply are discussed by Kanbur, Keen, and Tuomala in chapter 5 of this volume).

#### *Disutility and Stigma*

Any system of subsidy that requires people to be identified as poor and that is seen as a special benefaction for those who cannot fend for themselves would tend to have some effects on their self-respect as well as on the respect accorded them by others. These features do, of course, have their incentive effects as well, but quite aside from those indirect consequences, there are also direct costs and losses involved in feeling—and being—stigmatized. Since this kind of issue is often taken to be of rather marginal interest (a matter, allegedly, of fine detail), I would take the liberty of referring to John Rawls's argument that self-respect is "perhaps the most important primary good" on which a theory of justice as fairness has to concentrate (see Rawls 1971, pp. 440-46, where he discusses how institutional arrangements and public policies can influence "the social bases of self-respect").

#### *Administrative and Invasive Losses*

Any system of targeting—except targeting through self-selection—involves discriminating awards in which some people (typically government officials) judge the applications made by the would-be recipients. The procedure can involve substantial administrative costs, both

in the form of resource expenditures and bureaucratic delays. No less important, losses of individual privacy and autonomy can be involved in the need for extensive disclosures.

The finer the targeting is meant to be, the more invasive would the investigations typically be. Means-tested awards would require detailed revelation of personal circumstances. When the targeting takes the form of giving priority to a large group (such as a relatively poor region of the country), the investigations need not be so invasive, but that is only because the targeting is less fine. In general, there is no way of targeting specific deprivations without a corresponding informational invasion. The problem here is not just the necessity of disclosure and the related loss of privacy but also the social costs of the associated programs of investigation and policing. Some of these investigations can be particularly nasty, treating each applicant as a potential criminal.

There are, furthermore, social costs of asymmetric power. Minor potentates can enjoy great authority over the suppliant applicants. There are plenty of actual examples of the exercise of official authoritarianism that frequently accompanies informational investigations. The possibility of corruption is, of course, also present whenever some officials have significant control over the process of dispensing favors in the form of targeted benefits.

#### *Political Sustainability and Quality*

The beneficiaries of thoroughly targeted poverty-alleviation programs are often quite weak politically and may lack the clout to sustain the programs and maintain the quality of the services offered. Benefits meant exclusively for the poor often end up being poor benefits. In the context of the richer countries, such as the United States, this consideration has been the basis of some well-known arguments for having “universal” programs rather than heavily targeted ones confined only to the poorest.<sup>4</sup> Something of this argument certainly does apply to the poorer countries as well.

These different considerations relate in different ways to actions, thoughts, choices, and feelings of the subjects of targeting. There is nothing necessarily complex about recognizing the legitimacy of these concerns, but it is important that they are brought into the policy choices in an explicit and scrutinized way. Seeing the people affected by targeting as agents rather than as patients does have far-reaching implications.

#### **The Need for Selection**

The immediate question is whether the questioning of the merits of targeting indicates a case for dropping it altogether. It would be amaz-

ing if that were so. Economic policies—those aimed at poverty removal as well as others—try to achieve some results. And any such attempt must involve *some* targeting. If the aim is to increase female literacy or to vaccinate children, surely the policies must somehow concentrate on the illiterate females or the unvaccinated kids. Like Monsieur Jourdain in Molière’s *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, who spoke prose “without knowing it,” we are all targeting all the time if any selection of beneficiaries counts as that.

Coherence of poverty-relief policies would require some obvious selections—regions, classes, occupation groups, and so on. That is the “prose” we speak, and there is no question of doing without those selections. In most contexts, these elementary distinctions are well understood and can be fruitfully used in policymaking. Cogency of policy requires a concern with the identification of beneficiaries and some discrimination. The important issues lie elsewhere—to wit, in how far to push the discrimination and where to stop.

### Poverty as Capability Deprivation

In answering these questions, there is a case for raising a fairly foundational issue about the nature of poverty: what is the shape of the beast we are trying to tackle with variable amounts of targeting? The policy literature on poverty removal has been deeply concerned with the perspective of income deprivation. I would even argue that it has been obsessed by this one, undoubtedly important but partial, aspect of deprivation.

Here too we may need to take a more activity-oriented view of human beings. I have tried to argue elsewhere for seeing poverty as the failure of some basic capabilities to function—a person lacking the opportunity to achieve some minimally acceptable levels of these functionings (Sen 1984, 1985, 1992; see also Hossain 1990). The functionings relevant to this analysis can vary from such elementary physical ones as being well nourished, being adequately clothed and sheltered, avoiding preventable morbidity, and so forth, to more complex social achievements such as taking part in the life of the community, being able to appear in public without shame, and so on. The opportunity of converting personal incomes into capabilities to function depends on a variety of personal circumstances (including age, gender, proneness to illness, disabilities, and so on) and social surroundings (including epidemiological characteristics, physical and social environments, public services of health and education, and so on).

If we insist on seeing poverty in the income space (rather than directly in terms of capability failure), the relevant concept of poverty has to be *inadequacy* (for generating minimally acceptable capabilities) rather than *lowness* (independent of personal and social characteristics; the

extensive implications of this distinction are discussed in Sen 1992). Technically, this is “the inverse function” to that relating capabilities to incomes, but I shall not go into the formal representations here. The more general issue is that a concept of poverty that ignores the relevant variations in individual and social characteristics cannot do justice to our real concerns about poverty and deprivation, namely, inadequate capabilities.

It might be thought that to go beyond the low-income view of poverty must have the effect of making practical decisions much more complex than they already are. Even though the primary argument for seeking a better idea of poverty is not simplicity but cogency, I do not believe it does, in fact, make the practical problems *more* difficult. Indeed, in many ways, it does quite the contrary. The failure of some basic functionings (for example, having a disease or being illiterate) may be more directly observable than the actual income level of a person, so that the problem of informational distortions can be less acute.

Arguments for income-based targeting have tended to rely, typically implicitly, on two assumed advantages: (1) measurement opportunities and (2) relevance. Neither ground is very secure. Income estimates call for appropriate price and quantity data, and sometimes they are hard to get and easy to hide. Certainly, it is by no means clear that it is easier to get a firm view of personal income than to observe morbidity, disability, undernourishment, or illiteracy. And as far as relevance is concerned, since income is at best one of the means to other ends, there is some lack of directness in concentrating on incomes, rather than on the valued functionings that income promotes (along with other means).

Not all functioning achievements or failures are, of course, easy to observe. But some of the more basic and elementary ones are more amenable to direct observation and frequently enough provide useful informational bases for antideprivation policies. The informational bases for seeing the need for literacy campaigns, hospital service programs, and nutritional supplementation need not be particularly obscure.<sup>5</sup> To rely entirely on the income space would be, in such cases, quite counterproductive both on the grounds of relevance and that of observability.

This is not to deny that sometimes it will turn out that the functionings in question are really quite complex and are not so easily measurable, and there might well then be, in some cases, good pragmatic grounds for using income as the contingent criterion of discrimination (see Sen 1992). The measurement errors in assessing functionings can well be large enough in some cases to make it more sensible to rely on income information (despite the indirectness of its relevance and its own measurement problems). In practice, there is much to be said for using functioning information as well as income data after critically

scrutinizing the appropriateness of each. The case for combining the two types of information is strong.

No matter which particular indicator is chosen in a specific case, the general approach of poverty removal has to take adequate note of the purely instrumental nature of the importance of income, in contrast with the more intrinsic relevance of functionings, in assessing deprivation (I have discussed the relationship between income and the capability to function in assessing deprivation in Sen 1992, chaps. 6 and 7). It is important to see human beings not merely as recipients of income but as people attempting to live satisfactory lives and to see poverty not simply as low income but as the lack of real opportunities to have minimally adequate lives. Even when income turns out to be a good enough indicator of capability deprivation, that connection with the capability perspective has to be brought out clearly.

### Information and Incentive Compatibility

I turn now to a more specific discussion of the informational and incentive aspects of targeting. The informational aspect of targeting relates to the identifiability of the characteristics associated with deprivation. If the object of the exercise is to eliminate low incomes, then the income level of the person is the appropriate focal variable. If, however, the object is to eliminate, say, preventable morbidity or severe undernourishment or illiteracy, then those conditions, instead, must be the relevant focal variables.<sup>6</sup>

The main argument against taking income as the focal variable is that it is just a *means*—and only *one* of several means—to the type of life we have reasons to want to live. If, for example, we are talking about poverty in, say, Harlem in New York, the calculation of the lowness of income there is, I believe, a less telling indicator of poverty than the fact that a man born in Harlem has a lower expectation of living to any age above forty than the corresponding Bangladeshi has (and of course a much lower life expectancy than that enjoyed by the residents of China or Sri Lanka or the Indian state of Kerala).<sup>7</sup> In fact, the chances of surviving to higher age groups are systematically lower for the African American population as a whole (not just in Harlem) than for the Chinese or the Sri Lankan or the Keralan (even though the latter populations are immensely poorer, in terms of real income per person; see Sen 1993).

What about *incentives*? It is, in general, quite hopeless to look for some indicators that are both (1) relevant for identifying deprivation and (2) immune to incentive effects. This applies, I am afraid, to basic human functionings as well. But the picture is not entirely bleak for at least four distinct reasons.

First, people may typically be reluctant to refuse education, foster illnesses, or cultivate undernourishment on purely tactical grounds.



The priorities of reasoning and choice tend to militate against deliberately promoting these elementary deprivations. There are, of course, exceptions. Among the most distressing accounts of famine relief experiences are occasional reports of some parents keeping one child in the family thoroughly famished so that the family qualifies to get nutritional support (for example, in the form of take-home food rations)—treating the child, as it were, as a “meal ticket” (see the discussion of this issue in Dréze and Sen 1989, chap. 7, particularly pp. 109–13; the empirical observations come from Nash 1986 and Borton and Shoham 1989). But in general such incentive effects in keeping people undernourished or untreated or illiterate are relatively rare, for reasons that are not astonishing.

Second, the causal factors underlying some functional deprivations can go much deeper than income deprivation and may be very hard to adjust. For example, physical disabilities, old age, and gender characteristics are particularly serious sources of capability handicap because they are beyond the control of the persons involved. And for much the same reason, they are not open to incentive effects in the way the adjustable features are. This limits the incentive distortions of subsidies targeted on these features.

Third, there is a particular connection between the use of self-selection as a method of targeting and the valuational perspective to be used. If the selection can be left to the potential recipients themselves (for example, through offering employment at a basic wage to anyone who seeks such employment), the actual choices made will depend on all the values that influence the choices of the potential recipients. The result will not be based on income maximization only. A potential recipient may calculate the wage level associated with this employment offer, take note of any income forgone elsewhere, consider the levels of activity and toil involved in the respective alternatives, consider such nonwage benefits of employment as the promotion of self-respect and independence, and so on. Thus, through the choices made, the self-selecting potential recipient will tend to reflect a wider class of values than simply income maximization. Since the rationale of the capability perspective relates closely to this wider class of values, there is a clear connection between the move toward self-selection and the rationale of the capability perspective. Policymaking has to take note of the fact that the case for going beyond income considerations into the type of life led—including the various functionings performed—is relevant for the recipients themselves and will thus influence their decisions and choices (see Dréze and Sen 1989; Besley and Coate 1992; in addition, the chapters in this volume include enlightening explorations of the opportunities and costs of such programs—see, for example, Ravallion and Datt in chapter 15).

This type of self-selective targeting has been very successfully used in providing famine relief and can have a wider role in enhancing the

economic opportunities of the able-bodied deprived population.<sup>8</sup> The argument for this approach takes note of the fact that the chosen activities of the potential recipients are governed by considerations that are broader than maximization of income earned. In critically scrutinizing the use of this approach, attention must be paid to the costs incurred by the participants in terms of extra work, in addition to the costs of income forgone and the expenses of operating these employment schemes. It might turn out, in many contexts, that judged purely as targeting of transfer payments, these schemes are not clearly better than untargeted transfers given to all in a particular region, and the overall assessment may thus be quite sensitive to the value of the assets actually created by the public works programs (see chapter 15 in this volume). But the important point to note here is that the use of self-selection through work has a tractable rationale that identifies a significant and incentive-compatible option that can be systematically assessed and discriminatingly used.

Fourth, the refocusing of attention from low personal incomes to capability handicaps also points directly to the case for greater emphasis on direct public provision of such facilities as medical services and educational programs (see Anand and Ravallion 1993; Griffin and Knight 1990). These services typically cannot be shifted nor sold, and are not of much use to a person unless he or she actually needs them. There is, thus, some built-in matching in such provisioning, which makes it more incentive-compatible than the transfer of generalized purchasing power in the form of income (see Sen 1973, pp. 78–79).

The redistributive impact of direct public provision is sometimes judged by examining its consequences on the distribution of per capita real income (or expenditure). It is appropriate that this be done, since income is a generalized means of commanding facilities and commodities. But it cannot be the only focus of distributive attention, since ultimately we must also be concerned with the disparities in actual functionings and capabilities (in chapter 9 in this volume, van de Walle assesses the health services in *both* perspectives; see also chapter 18 and the other country papers in this volume). Inequalities in health and education have a direct relevance to policy that is not parasitic on their roles in generating income inequalities as such. This is a consideration of some general pertinence in devising broad strategies of targeting over distinct groups, such as regions, classes, or genders.

To sum up, capability-oriented reasonings in dealing with targeting problems have some distinct merits with regard to incentive compatibility. These relate to (1) the frequently lower manipulability of observed functionings (such as illness or illiteracy), (2) the fixity of predispositional characteristics (such as disability or genetic proneness to illness), (3) the usefulness of self-selection (such as employment offers), and (4) the nontransferability of benefits tied to personal functionings (such as personal medical care).

### **Social and Political Feasibility**

In this section, I discuss briefly a few social and political issues related to the general question of targeting. The social issue concerns the gap between the availability of public services and their actual use by deprived groups. The political question concerns the actual feasibility and acceptability of aiming public policy toward particular deprived groups.

To begin with the first problem, there is some evidence that even those services that are available, in principle, to all are nevertheless disproportionately used by some classes—usually the more affluent and better connected—than by others. This applies, for example, to urban medical services at free hospitals and even to institutions (such as the distinguished All India Institute of Medicine) that do not insist on a prior referral. The contrast is especially sharp in poor countries with large illiterate populations, and lack of education can certainly be an important constraint in the canny use of available public facilities on the part of the deprived.

In response, it is tempting to consider introducing forceful targeting to reserve free services only for the poor. It is very doubtful, however, that this can, in fact, be effectively done without being overwhelmed by the burden of costs of the different types discussed earlier. The need to examine this issue cannot be overlooked.

This question points to a related issue, the need to see the capability of making use of—and profiting from—untargeted public services as an important parameter that affects the consequences of public policy. That capability depends on a variety of considerations, but public education is certainly among the determining variables. It is, for example, arguable that one reason for the extensive and effective use of public health facilities in the state of Kerala in India (where the life expectancy at birth now exceeds 70 years—74 for women—despite the very low per capita income) is the high rate of literacy of the Kerala population (including women). Thus, a more comprehensive education policy can make the use of untargeted public services that much more effective in fighting poverty. Once again, the need to see the people involved as agents rather than as patients is central.

Turning to the second question—that of political feasibility—it is worth noting that there are some remarkable gaps in the focusing of public policy in many developing economies. For example, women in general and female children in particular are relatively deprived in terms of health care and basic education to an astonishing extent in many countries in the world, especially in Asia and North Africa. To do something about these inequalities would require policies more directed toward these deprived groups, including paying greater attention to female education and medical care in rural programs. Similarly,

if there is clear evidence of so-called urban bias in the distribution of governmental support and attention, there will be a good argument for general reorientation of policies in the direction of supporting the rural population. That does point to the case for more targeting of that type, if it is politically feasible to do so.

The political feasibility of such differential use of public services depends to a considerable extent on what the more powerful groups in a poor country see as imperative. For example, easily infectious diseases receive much greater attention than other types of maladies do, and they tend to get eliminated with remarkable efficiency. It has happened to smallpox, has nearly happened to malaria, and is on the way to happening to cholera. Even the poor would tend to get a lot of attention partly for good humanitarian reasons but also because a poor person with an infectious disease is a source of infection for others. Ailments that are not so infectious, including regular undernourishment, do not get quite that comprehensive attention.

I sometimes wonder whether there is any way of making poverty terribly infectious. If that were to happen, its general elimination would be, I am certain, remarkably rapid. This, alas, will not happen, but that counterfactual consideration points to a relationship—on the nature of social divisiveness—that has some direct bearing on the problem of targeting and poverty removal. Infections break down social divisions. Anything else that can do so can be similarly positive in its results.

Even enlightened politics and informed public discussion can play that unifying role. This is, of course, a point that goes back to the concerns of the leading figures of the European enlightenment, including the Marquis de Condorcet and Adam Smith. As deprivations of particular groups get politicized, they acquire a level of support far beyond what obtained earlier. For example, in the United States the problem of the medically uninsured, which has existed for a very long time (without being a political embarrassment to any government in power), has now at last started to receive some of the attention (however inadequate) that it has always deserved. In India, famines are politicized in a way that would make it hard for any government to survive if it failed to prevent a famine. But the deprivation of many millions without effective medical attention does not receive much widespread attention. The political feasibility and priority of targeting the medically deprived sections of the Indian population would depend not a little on a change in this situation.

The political economy of targeting has to be concerned not just with the economic problems of selection, information, and incentives but also with the political support for, and feasibility of, aiming public policy specifically at removing the deprivation of particular groups. While the scope of this chapter will not permit me to go into this question further, it is obvious that there is a connection here with the

political use of pressure groups and, more generally, with activist politics. The importance of agency, which was discussed earlier in the context of economic actions, extends to the political and social fields as well.

### Concluding Remarks

First, the elementary case for targeting has to be qualified by taking adequate note of the various costs of targeting, including informational manipulation, incentive distortion, disutility and stigma, administrative and invasive losses, and problems of political sustainability. These diverse considerations, which can reinforce each other, limit the scope for no-nonsense targeting, tempting as it is.

Second, some types of selection are inescapable parts of cogency and coherence of economic policy, including that of poverty removal. The question is how far to push those requirements of discrimination and at what cost. There is not going to be any general formula here, and much would depend on particular circumstances. I do not doubt that some expert in modern economics would find it helpful to say that targeting should be pushed exactly to the point at which the marginal benefit from it equals its marginal cost. Anyone who is enlightened by that wonderful formula fully deserves that enlightenment.

Third, to treat poverty not just as low income but also as capability handicap makes the exercise of poverty removal both more cogent and, in some important ways, also less subject to targeting distortions. I must not overemphasize this connection, since there are many other factors to be considered in arriving at overall policy judgments, but the specific considerations discussed earlier in this chapter belong solidly among the relevant features of targeting policies.

Finally, one of the general themes of this chapter has been the necessity to see the people to be influenced by targeted benefits not just as patients for whom things have to be done but also as agents whose actions and choices are central to the operation—and distortion—of targeting arrangements. That agency-oriented view applies not only to the purely economic problems in targeting but also to problems in social and political fields; the challenging issues in targeting include economic arguments for and against particular proposals and also the specific problems of social usability and political feasibility. The importance of the agency view is one of the elementary aspects of the political economy of targeting.

### Notes

1. The importance of recognizing the actions and reactions of recipients and other agents in devising policies to remove poverty is well brought out in a number of empirical studies included in this volume.

2. An account of some of the main problems, on the basis of the experiences of Western countries with targeting of family benefits, is provided in Atkinson's chapter in this volume (chapter 3). Various aspects of these problems, related primarily to developing countries, are discussed in Ahmad and others (1991).

3. Some of the underlying issues are discussed by Cornia and Stewart in chapter 13 of this volume, emphasizing the need to avoid what they call "*F*-mistakes" (F for the failure to cover all the genuine cases) in an attempt to prevent "*E*-mistakes" (E for excessive coverage). See also chapter 15.

4. See particularly Wilson (1987); Jencks and Peterson (1991); Skocpol (1991). I first saw the force of this argument in 1971 in a conversation with Terence (W. M.) Gorman at the London School of Economics, though I do not believe he ever wrote on this.

5. Undernourishment does, of course, have many complex aspects (see the papers included in Osmani 1992). Some aspects of nutritional deprivation are more easily observed than others.

6. The *capability* to achieve elementary levels of basic functionings is not directly measurable, but the actual fulfillment or the lack of it can tell us a great deal about whether the people in question had these elementary opportunities or not; indeed actual achievement is one of the possible ways of assessing capability itself. This connection is investigated from different perspectives in Sen (1992).

7. See McCord and Freeman (1990). The Harlem woman does better than her Bangladeshi counterpart, but only because of the extraordinarily high under-five mortality of females in Bangladesh, and indeed the life expectancy gap narrows radically as we consider later ages. See Sen (1993).

8. It will not help those who are too old or too disabled or too ill to work in that way, but such people can be easily identified in terms of these capability handicaps and supported through other, complementary schemes. The possibility and actual experiences of such complementary programs are discussed in Dréze and Sen (1989).

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