

# Measuring the good life

## Standard of living indicators

### Overview

With the help of a short text, participants work in teams to discuss different indicators which provide information on people's well-being and standard of living. In the process, the strengths and weaknesses of each indicator are determined and shared among the groups using the World Café Method.

### Instructions

#### Preparation

Sufficient copies of the working texts are prepared.

#### Execution





##### Comparison between indicators

In this stage of the activity, participants explore existing indicators created to measure well-being and standard of living:

- › Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
- › Happy Planet Index (HPI)
- › Human Development Index (HDI)
- › Gini Index
- › Genuine Progress Index (GPI)

The texts for the activity are based on those prepared by the German Federal Agency for Political Education, available in German at <http://www.bpb.de/files/693SM0.pdf>.

1. First, the instructions for the entire activity are explained to the participants, and the group is divided into 5 teams which will work together for the rest of the activity. This can either be done at random, or the participants can be allowed to choose which indicator they will work with; however, the groups should be as close in size as possible.
2. Each team examines one indicator. The members of the team each receive a copy of the text describing the indicator and its relative strengths and weaknesses. First, each participant reads the text, after which any comprehension issues are dealt with in the group.

	25
	60-70 minutes
	Flip charts, markers, tables; Downloadable materials ( <a href="http://www.endlich-wachstum.de">www.endlich-wachstum.de</a> ): Working texts
	Before working with specific indicators, it is advisable to ensure that the participants have a thorough understanding of the concepts "standard of living" and "good living". The method "Wohlstand und gutes Leben – Was bedeutet das für mich?" ("Well-being and good life – what do they mean to me?", chapter 3, currently only available in German) is suitable for this purpose.

3. In the next step, each team discusses the following questions, making a note of the main points:
  - › What does your indicator measure? What is calculated, and how?
  - › What picture of well-being and/or standard of living is painted by the index?
  - › What are in your opinion the strengths and weaknesses of the indicator? Which question is it best suited to answer?
4. The team then jointly prepares an image which represents its indicator.
5. After the team stage, all participants come together in a plenary session. One after the other, the groups present their image, without saying which indicator they examined. The other participants interpret the image and try to guess the corresponding indicator. For this step it is helpful to list the names of the indicators on a flip chart. Enough space should be left to add what is measured by each indicator later.
6. At this point, the World Café begins, and the participants take a place at the previously prepared tables.

### World Café

During the team stage, the furniture in the main room is rearranged for the World Café activity: according to the group size, 5 tables or pairs of tables are arranged throughout the room with the appropriate number of chairs. An empty flip chart pad and several markers are placed on each table. The World Café provides a varied way of bringing together the findings of the team stage.

Participants find a place at the tables, ensuring that each table has a roughly equal number of representatives from each team. Each table selects a person to make notes on the “tablecloth” (flip chart) during the discussion.

- › Task for the first round: “Present your indicators to each other as clearly as possible. Then decide what your indicators have in common/what sets them apart. Make a note of the most important information on the ‘tablecloth’.”
- › Task for the second round: “To what extent is your indicator an appropriate tool to measure well-being and standard of living? Collect arguments for and against the indicator and keep a record of them on the ‘tablecloth’.”
- › Task for the third round: “How could your indicator be completed in order to more accurately reflect well-being? Could more than one of these indicators be combined, or do you have any ideas for an entirely new indicator?”

After each round, all the participants move to different tables, ensuring there are representatives of all teams at each table. Only the person recording ideas on the tablecloth remains at the same table in order to report to their new companions on the previous round.

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More information about the World Café Method can be found at the following link: <http://www.theworld-cafe.com/method.html>.

#### Variations

Instead of the World Café, for the second part of the activity the teams can present their indicator to the other participants using the image they created and a poster. A more comprehensive examination of the issue of measuring good life is provided by the method “Indicators of the Good Life” (chapter 3).

#### Tips for facilitators

Current data can be accessed at the following websites:  
 HPI: <http://www.happy-planetindex.org/data/>  
 HDI: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>  
 Gini-Index: <http://data.world-bank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI>  
 GPI: <http://genuineprogress.net/genuine-progress-indicator/>  
 GDP: <https://www.destatis.de/EN/Homepage.html>