

Article Linkhttp://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/05/31/you_cant_always_get_what_you_w...

You Can't Always Get What You Want

"What Amazon.com and Netflix can teach us about fighting poverty."

Unfortunately, the word "poor" has lots of opposites, and not all of them have to do directly with money. "Healthy," "well-educated," "having access of clean water," and "nourished" are among the many opposites of "poor," and when we think about the relative merits of antipoverty programs, we have to weigh each of these things — and more — against each other. But how do we compare the importance of, say, health versus education versus housing? And how do we make tradeoffs between them? One approach is to apply our own values and priorities, but this ignores the preferences of the very people for whose benefit these programs are designed. This happens often in the world of development aid; a donor focusing on education, for example, might care more about classroom quality than hospital beds. But wouldn't it be better if we could instead ask the people receiving our help what they want?

May 31, 2011