Building Analytic Capacity in Conjunction with LSMS Surveys: The Kyrgyz Republic

Raylynn Oliver

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Poverty and Human Resources Division
Policy Research Department
The World Bank

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Raylynn Oliver has worked as a consultant for the World Bank on various projects connected to the LSMS surveys since 1990.
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I. INTRODUCTION

The World Bank has supported the implementation of Living Standard Measurement Study (LSMS) surveys since 1985. In the early surveys, the focus of the projects was almost exclusively on data collection. Increasingly there is an interest in building capacity among institutions within the country where the data are collected to use those data for input to policy discussions. The World Bank is sponsoring case studies of four countries to review the experience to date in building analytic capacity in conjunction with LSMS surveys. The purpose of the case studies is to help design projects for surveys and building analytic capacity.

The emphasis here is on the capacity necessary to carry out analysis relevant to social policies including those related to poverty, employment, education, health, nutrition, and welfare policy. Sound, quantitative analysis of these issues should be an important input into the process of formulating and evaluating government policies. Furthermore, this input, if it is conducted in-country has the advantage of coming at the appropriate time and on the most important topics. Furthermore, it may be given greater weight in policy discussions than analysis conducted by foreign experts. Analytic capacity includes the ability to apply a range of techniques, from descriptive tabulations to complex statistical models, projections and simulations.

The experience of the LSMS survey in the Kyrgyz Republic is interesting for three reasons. The first is that the project was designed to gather the first round of data as quickly as possible, a strategy common to many LSMS surveys. The second is that several features of the project were innovative or are probably important first steps that help to lay the groundwork for any capacity building that might be done in the future, including the open data access policy and the immediate use made of the data in analyzing policy questions. Finally, the experience of the Kyrgyz Republic is interesting because many of the questions regarding the integration of capacity building into the LSMS programs are coming from transition countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union that may find the experience of the Kyrgyz Republic more applicable than that of countries in other regions.

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1The Poverty and Human Resources Division of the Policy Research Department (PRDPH) is sponsoring case studies equivalent to this one in Jamaica, Bolivia, South Africa and Viet Nam. PRDPH is the central research division that maintains the archives of the LSMS data, provides technical support to new LSMS survey projects throughout the world, and conducts research on survey methodology. The Human Resources Division of the Africa Technical Department (AFTHR) is planning a similar effort in several countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. AFTHR is the regional division that provides technical support to the Social Dimensions of Adjustment surveys and that maintains the archive of those data sets.
II. THE KYRGYZ LIVING STANDARDS MEASUREMENT SURVEY

A. Background

The first social sector mission of the World Bank to the Kyrgyz Republic was in September 1992. There were follow-up missions in January, March and May 1993. The results of these missions are presented in the report Kyrgyzstan: Social Protection in a Reforming Economy. A priority for the government was the protection of the most vulnerable people during the transition and the targeting of social assistance. In order to help the government design a program of assistance it was necessary to identify the nature and extent of poverty in the country. The poverty line that was currently in use by the government was believed to be unrealistically high so the initial work would also involve redefining the poverty line.

A substantial amount of data has always been collected by the State Statistical Committee. Since 1951 there has been an annual survey of living standards, the Family Budget Survey, and a 100 percent census every 10 years. However, the Family Budget Survey was not representative of the population in general. Some categories of workers such as the armed forces and full-time employees of the Communist Party were excluded from surveys of earnings and other categories, especially the poor are excluded altogether. Furthermore, since the beginning of reform an increasing portion of the population is not connected with a State enterprise and therefore falls outside of the sampling coverage of the Family Budget Survey that is still conducted with the sample inherited from the old Union-wide sample used before independence.

The decision was made in Spring 1993 to proceed as quickly as possible with a baseline household survey in Kyrgyzstan that would better represent the entire population than the Family Budget Survey in order to assess the poverty and employment situation. The survey would cover 2,000 households and all the individuals in those households and provide additional detailed information on prices and other relevant food market and community service and infrastructure. The Kyrgyz Multi-Purpose Survey, as the Living Standard Measurement Study survey in Kyrgyzstan was called, was conducted as part of project preparation rather than project implementation. The purpose was to collect data to support the World Bank poverty assessment for the country, to provide data for the preparation work on other components of the World Bank Social Safety Net Project, and to provide data for use by the Kyrgyz government and other local institutions.

As mentioned in the introduction, the KMPS survey was not designed to build local capacity either in the collection or analysis of data. It was recognized that there would be some indirect impact through the construction of a sampling frame and the training of local interviewers but the entire design, including the use of a foreign research team and survey instruments developed for Russia, with slight modifications, was directed toward making
nationally-representative household living standards baseline data available to the World Bank quickly.

B. The Survey and Data Analysis

The KMPS was carried out in October and November 1993 under the direction of researchers from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Paragon Research International, Inc. and the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The team had recently carried out a similar survey in Russia. The survey was partially funded through a Japanese grant approved to support project preparation and partly by the World Bank as an element of its analytical work on the country.

Table 1. Timing of Events Related to the Kyrgyz LSMS Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Social Sector Mission</td>
<td>Sep 92</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Social Sector Mission</td>
<td>Jan 93</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third Social Sector Mission - decision to do a household survey</td>
<td>Mar 93</td>
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<td>EDI Conference in Washington</td>
<td>Mar 93</td>
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<td>Fourth Social Sector Mission</td>
<td>May 93</td>
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<td>Publication of the Social Reform Document</td>
<td>Sep 93</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Sector Mission</td>
<td>Sep 93</td>
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<tr>
<td>KMPS - questionnaire translation</td>
<td>Aug-Sep 93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMPS - interviewer training</td>
<td>Oct 93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMPS - field work</td>
<td>Oct-Nov 93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMPS - data entry</td>
<td>Jan 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMPS - data cleaning</td>
<td>Feb 94</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preliminary tabulations distributed</td>
<td>Jun 94</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDI preparatory mission</td>
<td>Jun-Jul 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local expert's papers commissioned</td>
<td>Jul 94</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clean data sets to World Bank</td>
<td>end Jul 94</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation of social sector Discussion Papers</td>
<td>Aug 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDI Conference in Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>Sep 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data sets to Goskomstat</td>
<td>Nov 94</td>
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While the focus of the work of the World Bank and the selection of topics of analysis were the result of discussions between representatives of the World Bank and officials of the Kyrgyz government, those officials were not consulted regarding the content of the survey.

Initial tabulations in Russian of the results of the survey were released to Goskomstat and other Ministries in June 1994 when the data sets were provided to the World Bank. The data then formed the basis for a set of analytic papers prepared for the World Bank by researchers in the US, UK, Italy and Australia as background to the poverty assessment and project preparation. These papers are listed in Table 2.
Table 2. Research Papers Using the Data from the Kyrgyz Multi-Purpose Survey

| Overview: The Multipurpose Survey. B. Popkin |
| A Subsistence Income Level for Kyrgyzstan. B. Popkin |
| A Profile of Poverty in Kyrgyzstan, October to November, 1993. J. Falkingham and R. Ackland |
| The Kyrgyz Labor Market in Autumn 1993. S. Marnie |
| Social Assistance and the Social Safety Net in Kyrgyzstan. J. Falkingham |

Wide dissemination of the results of analysis that used the data was made possible by an Economic Development Institute (EDI) Seminar held in September, 1994. The seminar was one in a series of EDIHR/EC3HR training seminars on Social Safety Nets organized for countries of the FSU. This one focussed on poverty issues both because of their importance and because of the availability of the data from the Kyrgyz Multi-Purpose Survey. The papers listed in Table 2 were presented at that seminar. In addition, local experts in the fields of vocational education, employment, social assistance, nutrition and pensions were recruited to prepare papers briefly describing the main issues and recent trends in the sectors and to pose the questions that the government of Kyrgyzstan could expect to see answered through analysis and discussion of the survey data. All of the papers did the former, none did the latter. This reflected a lack of experience of asking questions of data and the fact that the local experts did not have access to the raw survey data. Tabulations of the survey data were circulated but time did not allow the local experts the opportunity to request specific tabulations in preparation of these sectoral papers.

The seminar sponsored jointly by EDI and Goskomstat was attended by fifty high level representatives from the Government Apparatus, Trade Unions, National Statistic Committee, the Social Fund, the Government Committee on the Economy, the Republican Center for People’s Medicine and the Ministries of Labor and Social Protection, Health, Education and Science. Also present were observers from Kyrgyz Universities and from neighboring countries. In the course of the seminar, the results of the analysis using survey data were widely distributed and discussed. After being familiarized with the data available from the Kyrgyz Multi-purpose Survey, seminar participants were invited to request specific tabulations related to their individual spheres of interest. The presentation of these custom-prepared tabulations did generate some excitement among policy makers regarding the potential contribution of such analysis to their policy decisions.

The data sets were to be given to Goskomstat as soon as possible. Data sets in appropriate format were eventually provided in November 1994. Lack of interest in data that were already a year old and scheduling difficulties prevented the presentation of a follow-up
workshop that was intended to advertise to all potential users that the data were available at Goskomstat and to provide assistance in using those data in policy making.

The data sets remain with Goskomstat. The agreement stipulated that the data are the sole property of the Government of Kyrgyzstan but that the World Bank has the right to unrestricted use of the data and the right to transfer it to third parties. Officially, the data will be made available for use by the general research community subject to the restrictions 1) the data shall not be transferred to third parties, 2) in all uses of the data, due recognition of their source shall be made, 3) prior to release or publication of analysis resulting from the data, the researcher shall allow a period of four weeks to comment on the paper and 4) the researcher shall make copies of all publications stemming from the data available. In practice, the data seem to be made easily available. A foreign advisor on tax policy was interested in using the data to estimate incidence of tax policy alternatives. He submitted a written request explaining his interest and was quickly given the complete data sets. Lack of concern for control stems partially from the feeling among the officials at Goskomstat that the data are out-of-date and, therefore, not sensitive.

The KMPS project did have some impact on the policy making environment. However, the exclusion of Goskomstat personnel from the survey development and carrying out had an unfortunate and lasting effect. The statistical methods in place for 70 years are sufficiently entrenched that explanations of the inadequacy of the Family Budget Survey are often met with disinterest. Because the Kyrgyz Multi-Purpose survey data were gathered, processed and analyzed elsewhere, they remain a "foreign" presence in Goskomstat. Some people are aware of the data sets but not familiar enough with them or their attributes to forsake the familiar, locally collected data in favor of the complicated unknown data.
III. LOCAL CAPACITY FOR DATA ANALYSIS

There are many local organizations especially devoted to research on social policy. The Ministry of Health contains a Department of Medical Information and many departments (eg. Department of Protection of Motherhood and Children) have research divisions. The research done by these departments seems to mainly consist of the tabulation of the incidence of disease, the number of hospitals, number of hospital beds, death rate, maternal mortality, cause of death, etc. by raion.

In contrast, the Ministry of Education has no budget or personnel to support research (annual budget for the entire ministry $35000). However, the State Committee on Science and New Technology of the Ministry of Education coordinates and finances all scientific research except that financed by the National Academy of Sciences. Research topics are chosen from among applications received from scientific organizations and governmental tasks.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy receives their data from Goskomstat but they do very little analytical research. The Department of Labor Market Conditions with assistance from GTZ produces a monthly report with figures, graphs and tables illustrating labor market trends. Ministry of Economy determines the living standards index but has no resource to support analytical research. Under the Ministry of Economy there is a Research Institute of the Economy with 35 specialists that produce reports on a research agenda that is set by the Ministry of Economy. Their analysis is largely simple descriptive tables but they have substantial hardware capability.

The National Statistical Committee and its research and teaching wing, the Statistics Research Institute, do data analysis. The former producing tables on data that they have collected and the research of the latter is limited to developing methodology for calculating national statistics according the international standards.

Other institutions include the National Academy of Science, the Kyrgyz National University, the International Institute for Strategic Studies established in 1994 by Presidential decree to do independent research on economic and foreign policy issues, and the Department of Political and Social Problem Analysis in the Apparatus of the President.

Obstacles to effective analysis of data for policy purposes can be divided into pre- and post-independence problems. Before independence there was no shortage of money or personnel for researching issues and there was no shortage of data—everything was counted. Problems existed because data were often not made available to the non-official research community. Furthermore, because micro-data were never made available to anyone there is no tradition or capacity for analyzing micro-data. Every Ministry and State Committee even Universities and Research Institutes suffer from an inefficient combination of being at the same time highly centralized and severely compartmentalized. There is also a great deal of
duplication of responsibility, for example, there are departments responsible for health policy in the Presidential Apparatus, the Prime Minister's Office, and the Ministry of Health. These organizational structures make the data - analyst - policy maker path far from direct.

Independence has brought some openness with regard to data, though the reflex is usually to not share data or information, including published reports. The National Statistical Committee is an exception, they are proudly participating in the new market economy by selling their publications. Unfortunately most data is much less complete now than in the past. Enterprises and individuals are no longer compelled to provide data as they were in the past. Also, with privatization, an increasing number of individuals and enterprises are not in the state sector and their activities fall outside of the measurement of the National Statistical Committee. Financial crunches hit at every level; the Ministry of Justice introduced a rather substantial charge for birth and death registration that was immediately followed by a dramatic decline in the birth and death rates, especially in the poorer parts of the country. Drastic budget cuts have almost completely eliminated the research done in Universities and the National Academy of Sciences. The economics staff of the National Academy was reduced from 200 to 15, leaving only the most senior members and almost no research is done.

If we consider the chain: data - computers - researchers - policy analysts. There are several weak links:

1. data is often incomplete, inaccurate, and almost never used at the individual level
2. computers, software and programming ability are adequate, but there is little experience with anything beyond tabulations
3. researchers exist, though many are no longer working as researchers and many have no experience with quantitative analysis
4. policy makers are often not qualified to request or analyze sophisticated data analysis especially in the policy making (as opposed to policy defending) stage
IV. LESSONS

The lack of analytic capacity and under-utilization of data in the policy process reflect the historical legacy of data collection and use in the Soviet Union. Data were used primarily to measure the achievement of targets and were subject to substantial manipulation. There is no tradition of data analysis in the answer of broader questions. Atkinson and Micklewright (1992) describe the censorship and distortion of data in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union before the reform.

The highly centralized structure of the Soviet Union also resulted in lower analytic capacity. Although, local Goskomstat personnel were involved in conducting the Family Budget Survey for Kirghizia, they were not involved in the data entry or analysis. Completed questionnaires were taken to Moscow and tabulations processed there. Tabulations, not actual data, were then returned to Frunze. Also distribution of these tabulations was extremely limited.

The structure of Goskomstat presents another obstacle to local analytic use of the data. The staff of Goskomstat decides what data is to be collected, designs the survey instruments and instructs local Goskomstat offices to collect the data. The data are then collected and submitted to the computer unit in Bishkek. Reports are prepared using the data to specifications provided by the Goskomstat staff. There is not a lot of informal interaction between the staff of Goskomstat and the computing center staff and therefore not much interaction between the staff and the data.

In order for data to be widely used in the policy process, there first needs to be a strategic approach to policy formulation taken within the line ministries that constitute Goskomstat's client base. It must be the policy makers who first ask the questions that can be answered with the data. Again, the bureaucratic legacy of the Soviet Union and its highly centralized decision making apparatus did not encourage the development of initiative and responsibility at the local level.

The actual time lapsed between the decision to conduct the household survey and the date the data was available would have afforded ample time to involve, to a much greater extent, policy makers and Goskomstat staff in the design, conduct and analysis of the data. However, it is important to realize that the initial schedule, driven by the concern to design the social safety net project as quickly as possible, did not allow sufficient time for greater involvement.

A dream capacity building exercise: A foreign expert familiar with LSMS data and analysis is teamed with an employee of Goskomstat who is given a computer and will act as a liaison between the computing center and data users. A staff member selected by the Minister in each relevant Ministry and would be given a 486 computer with Lotus, Wordperfect, and Stata with a small data set for practice and training in how to use the data and the software. Soon after that the actual survey data sets would be installed on each
individual's computer and tutoring would be given to each person to help them prepare tabulations of variables relevant to their Ministry. Next a seminar would be given for the Deputies of all relevant Ministries explaining the survey, the questionnaires, the data, the difference between this data and the data previously available, and possible uses of the data using real world examples. In each Ministry the analyst would present the initial tabulations to the Deputies. The Deputies would then be helped to formulate a list of questions relevant to the policies that he or she is currently considering. Individual help would be given to each of the analysts on ways of using the data to answer those questions, presenting the answers on paper, and discussing the analysis in person with the Deputies or Ministers.

The time and money required to perform such a comprehensive capacity building exercise would depend on the number of Ministries and State Committees that were to be involved. There are 22 so it wouldn't be practical to include all of them. The exercise could begin with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, Ministry of Finance, and the State Committee of Economy. For those five ministries it would take perhaps three months to implement the entire exercise. It would take one person full time from each Ministry and two or three days time of each Deputy Minister.

The only chance such an exercise would have of being supported and, therefore, successful would be if it were done within six months of the survey date. After that the computers would be welcomed but the interest in the data would be strictly academic. If this exercise were conducted with "fresh" data then Deputies and analysts may begin to understand how the data are potentially useful even a year or more after the survey date. However, this usefulness would not be understood at the outset and the project would not get much support if the data were not extremely recent.
V. CONCLUSIONS

The highly trained staff in Ministries and Goskomstat, and the highly educated level of the population in general, represent a potential for extensive analytic capacity. What is lacking is the demand for analysis in the development of policy and experience using data in a proactive way.

Developing interest in fine-tuning and developing policy using input from data is difficult when the financial situation is so grim. All Ministries face such an overwhelming lack of funds that questions of where they would spend money if they had any are of secondary importance.

The need for data immediately may be an overriding consideration. However, failure to create a local feeling of data ownership seriously impedes the use that can be made of that data. At the same time local ownership of the data is not sufficient to guarantee that it will be used. Use of data requires not only analytical/data capacity but also a demand for the analysis. Some capacity building can be done after the survey, but not too long after. True integration of the data into the system requires a feeling of ownership of the data that only comes with being part of the process from beginning to end.
References


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Popkin, B. A Subsistence Income Level for Kyrgyzstan.


Thompson, D. Social Insurance and Labor Pensioners.

World Bank. The 1993 Kyrgyzstan Multipurpose Poverty Survey: Documentation. PRDPH.
Appendix 1. Structure of the National Statistical Committee

Approximately 1,100 people work in the national Natkomstat network. The staff of the central administration in Bishkek contains 114 people. The structure of the office in Bishkek provided below is basically replicated in the oblast and raion offices. Information is collected in raions, forwarded to oblasts and on to the computing center in Bishkek that contains approximately 300 people. The computing center compiles the data and produces tables to the specifications provided to it by the staff of the central office. These reports are then circulated to the offices of the President, the Prime Minister, and the relevant Ministries and Committees.

Each year in October NATKOMSTAT submits a work plan that must be endorsed by the government. The work plan and financing are considered by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economy both of which then make recommendations to the government.

The Chairman, Zhymakadyr Akeneev, has three Deputies that are responsible for the work of the Departments. The three Deputies also divide responsibility for supervising the six oblast and Bishkek city Statistical Committee Offices. Reporting directly to the Chairman are the Chief Consultant/Coordinator of the World Bank Social Safety Net Project, Valentina Dmitrievna Lomakova, and the personnel and accounting departments.

There is a research institute associated with the State Statistical Committee: Institute of Research on Statistical Studies. The institute was established three years ago. The 23 staff conduct research on statistical methods and run a teaching center.

First Deputy

Department of Organization and Methods of Statistics. Responsible for distributing the documents on laws and methods to the statistical offices in oblasts and raions.

Department of Industry, Transport and Communication Statistics. Collects and processes information regarding those three sectors. Prepares analytic materials and issues bulletins to the relevant Ministry and Government offices.

Agricultural Statistics. Conducts surveys including the census of cattle, fruit trees, etc. Prepares all agricultural indices. Has begun to collect data from private farms and dachas as well as collectives. Sub-departments are responsible for husbandry and vegetation.

Civil Construction and Investment. Collects and processes information regarding the production of buildings, including schools, hospitals and homes.

Department of Demographic Statistics. Responsible for current reporting on population including migration, marriage, divorce, birth and death. Conducts a census of the population
once every ten years, the last was in 1983. In 1991, the Social Demographic Survey was actually a mini-census. Five percent of the population was surveyed.

**Sampling and Families Documents.** Preserves questionnaires in archives.

**Social Demographic Survey Department.** Is currently responsible for evaluating all of the country's assets.

**Deputy #2**

Department of National Accounting Statistics. This new department is only three years old. It is responsible for calculating GDP. Technical Assistance from OECD reported that their work was far ahead of that in other FSU countries.

General Economic Department collects information from all departments and compiles booklets. This department is the liaison to the government.

Foreign Economic Trade measures imports and exports. There is a special questionnaire for trade within the CIS. The IMF has consulted with this department and EUROSTAT is planning a project.

Financial, Currency and Bank Statistics is responsible for calculating the budget deficit, handles accounting and debts between enterprises, calculates the enterprises income and expenditure.

International Cooperation Department is a new department that used to be part of the General Economic Department. The five staff work with international organizations, meet foreign missions and answer foreign letters. Every three months they issue a bulletin for the UN.

**Deputy #3 Social Sphere**

Department of Social Statistics is responsible for information on education (# schools, # students, # teachers), the health care system, cultural enterprises (theaters, cinemas, cultural palaces), ecology and environmental protection, housing, and utilities. Much of the information processed by this department is actually gathered by the individual ministries.

Employment Statistics gathers information including the number employed and wages and calculates average salary and the number of unemployed. Their work is with the Employment Ministry. Much of their data used to come from unions. Other reports include average salary by specialization, employment by nationality, and the number of people working in administration (government).
Consumer Market/Retail Trade measures domestic retail trade, volume of sales, prices, availability of goods. To try to capture the informal market there is now a special survey every month of randomly selected informal market vendors.

Living Standards, Statistics of the Family Budget, since 1950 this department calculates the food basket and provides information to the government. It is responsible for the family budget survey that continuously monitors income and expenditures of 1,100 families.

Prices and International Comparisons is a new department responsible for calculating inflation, the price indices for retail and wholesale trade. Two times a month prices are surveyed.
### Research Project 679-61 Working Papers

**Improving the Policy Relevance of Living Standards Measurement Study Surveys**

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