Participation in Poverty Assessments

Andrew Norton
Thomas Stephens

June 1995
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<td>CESW</td>
<td>Country Economic and Sector Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Nongovernmental Organization</td>
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<td>OD</td>
<td>Operational Directive</td>
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<td>PA</td>
<td>Poverty Assessment</td>
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<td>PER</td>
<td>Public Expenditure Review</td>
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Acknowledgments

This is one of a series of papers written as inputs to the World Bank's Participation Sourcebook. These papers were themselves produced in a participatory way. Topics were selected by a technical committee chaired by Bhuvan Bhatnagar; and the production of the paper was guided by a steering committee convened by Andrew Norton and consisting of participation practitioners with a knowledge of poverty assessment.

The series builds on the work of a participation learning group which was led over three years by David Beckman and Aubrey Williams. It has benefitted from financial support from the World Bank’s Vice Presidencies for Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD) and Human Resources Development & Operations Policy (HRO), and from support from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and the German Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ).

The authors would like to acknowledge gratefully the many valuable comments and suggestions received from the steering committee formed to provide guidance in the preparation of this paper: John Clark, Ann Duncan, John Innes, Evangeline Javier, Alexandre Marc, Larry Salmen, Lynne Sherburne-Benz, and Roger Sullivan. Several poverty assessment task managers and social scientists involved in participatory poverty assessments were also kind enough to share with us their views and experiences, including Mark Woodward, Adriana de Leva, Sarah Keener, Anne Doize, Qaiser Khan, Steen Jorgensen, Miria Figato, Branko Milanovic, Nicholas Prescott, Claire Lucas, Hugo Diaz, Jorge Garcia-Mujica, Deepa Narayan, Gibwa Kajubi, Maurizia Tovo and Polly Jones. Without their candid insights, this paper could not have been written. A special word of thanks goes to Gloria Davis and Bhuvan Bhatnagar for their support and assistance. Ted Howard provided editorial assistance.
Executive Summary

This paper provides an overview of current World Bank experience of expanding the participatory involvement of various stakeholders in the preparation of Poverty Assessments. For purposes of analysis, the paper looks at participation at the level of "primary stakeholders"—the actual poor in the country, however defined—and at the level of "institutional stakeholders"—those government and societal actors who are responsible for defining a country's poverty problems and policy solutions, as well as those institutional actors responsible for implementing agreed poverty reduction measures. The paper also distinguishes between "participation in Poverty Assessments" (PAs) and "Participatory Poverty Assessments" (PPAs), the latter term referring to the use of various research techniques to explore the perceptions of the participants (for example, beneficiary assessment and Participatory Rapid Appraisal).

PPAs have been used in a number of poverty assessments in order to provide clearer insight into the perceptions of the poor themselves on key issues related to poverty reduction. The premise is that involving the poor in the process will contribute to ensuring that the strategies identified for poverty reduction will reflect their concerns, including the priorities and obstacles to progress as seen by the poor themselves. PPAs have covered a range of issues applying to most areas of analysis and policy commonly covered in Poverty Assessments, including: (i) enriching the poverty profile through illustrating dimensions of the experience of poverty and vulnerability which conventional poverty analysis based on statistical outcomes tends to ignore; (ii) expanding the understanding of the impact of public expenditures and services through eliciting perceptions of the poor on the accessibility and relevance of social and economic services; (iii) expanding the analysis of the operation of factor markets by illustrating the constraints on realizing market based opportunities which operate on different social groups among the poor; (iv) contributing to policy prescription on the economic and regulatory framework through outlining the impact of restrictive regulations on poor households and communities; (v) supporting analysis of appropriate public policy on "social safety nets" for vulnerable groups by examining the local experience of the operation of formal and informal safety net systems, and illustrating the various strategies by which the poor cope with the negative effects of change; and (vi) illustrating the capacities of the poor to act independently through structures of community organization.

With regard to the management of PPAs, the logistics and administrative inputs have varied enormously for those undertaken thus far. Time and the availability of funds have been the two most important variables—with PPAs ranging in cost from less than $15,000 and entailing ten days of field work, to those costing over $100,000 and requiring several months to go from initial training to final report writing.

Turning to participation with institutional stakeholders, the paper stresses the importance of building ownership and collaboration with these stakeholders. Just as the poor as primary beneficiaries will be the intended recipients and ultimate arbitrators of the efficacy and appro-
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The paper notes that there are essentially four steps or points where participatory approaches among institutional stakeholders can occur in the preparation of poverty assessments. Participation can take place in (i) defining and shaping the research agenda, (ii) undertaking the analytical work once the research agenda is set, (iii) formulating the policy prescriptions and strategies based on the outcomes of the analysis and research, and (iv) disseminating the results and policy proposals for purposes of achieving consensus and ownership within government and society as a whole.

Notwithstanding the widely varying country circumstances where PAs have been completed, some of the early "lessons learned" in making PAs more participatory include:

- Increasing participatory interaction will usually involve a task manager losing some "control" over the contents and output of the PA, but with benefits in terms of an increased level of ownership of the final product(s) in government and civil society. Influencing and sensitizing policymakers in the process of systematically addressing poverty issues is more important than the actual contents of the PA itself.

- Participation can occur at many different points in the cycle of preparing a PA, but each kind of stakeholder can be involved at each stage in the cycle. Mechanisms for promoting stakeholder participation include, but are not limited to, workshops, review committees, government contact points, collaborative research arrangements, and coordination/advocacy mechanisms, as well as participatory research involving the poor.

- The use of PPAs in the preparation of PAs and other poverty related work is a new and very promising approach to generating policy relevant conclusions in a manner which can complement, test and inform the results of more conventional economic and social analysis. The methodologies of PPAs are still evolving, but it is already clear that the results can have important policy relevance and impact.

- Participation in the preparation of poverty assessments is best seen as an ongoing process of analysis and collaboration with stakeholders (government, civil society and the poor). Hurrying a product's preparation to meet internal Bank-imposed deadlines is clearly not the best way to achieve systematic participatory interaction. Given a longer time frame (such as three to four years), task managers should be able to plan for ongoing structured consultation and participation—as should be the norm for all Country Economic and Sector Work (CESW).
1. Introduction

This paper examines the role and use of participatory activities in the preparation of Poverty Assessments (PA), which now constitute an essential part of Country Economic and Sector Work (CESW). By analogy, many of the issues raised are also relevant to the preparation of other forms of poverty-focused CESW and analytical work. As stipulated in Operational Directive (OD) 4.15 on Poverty Reduction, Poverty Assessments should be seen as only one element in a process of poverty related analysis that permeates all aspects of country strategy. Such a strategy does not begin or end with the preparation of the Poverty Assessment itself.

Policy analysis and formulation for poverty reduction is an ongoing and iterative process that requires continuous update and adjustment in the face of a country's changing socioeconomic circumstances and institutional responsiveness. This process can be supported by the World Bank and other donors, but it should be motivated primarily by social and political forces within the country. Poverty Assessments, while only a small element in this overall effort, nonetheless have the potential of helping to achieve consensus on the major issues and policy requirements among the many social groups with a direct stake in the policy outcomes. The likelihood of this happening can be improved through an expanded use of participation in the preparation of Poverty Assessments and the accompanying follow-up.

In terms of the poverty analysis, OD 4.15 is explicit in recognizing poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon which requires an interdisciplinary analytical approach:

"The economic framework [of a country] notwithstanding, poverty reflects the results of, and complementarities among, cultural, sociological and political factors. Analyses of the cultural constraints, sociological context, and/or political dynamics in which poverty persists contribute to understanding the process of poverty in a particular country and to evaluating the full costs and likely benefits of alternative measures to reduce poverty. Such analyses also contribute to the development of the overall country institutional framework for poverty reduction and strategies to build institutional capacity to analyze poverty and to design interventions to reduce it. These analyses add to the cost of interventions, but they improve policy, project, and program design and sustainability, and reduce failure risks." (Para. 8)

To achieve this level of analysis requires careful attention to involving and consulting with a wide range of civic actors and stakeholders, not to mention the poor themselves. Participation in this sense is seen as a critical factor to understand the various social, economic, and political dynamics which perpetuate the conditions of poverty in a given country, as well as to assure that those consulted have an allegiance to the proposed solutions. For purposes of this paper, participation is defined to include various forms of Bank contact, consultation, collaboration, and advocacy with primary and institutional stakeholders.

A distinction is also made between "participation in Poverty Assessments" and "Participatory Poverty Assessments" (PPAs). The latter is a shorthand term which has come to refer to
the use of various participatory research techniques to discern perceptions, priorities or attitudes of participants (such as beneficiary assessment and Participatory Rapid Appraisal). Because PPAs are normally considered one component of the wider PA, the focus of the paper is not just on PPAs but on the whole spectrum of participatory activities and approaches that can potentially involve all levels of stakeholders in the preparation and follow up of a Poverty Assessment.

Types of Stakeholders

This paper is thus concerned with participation at two conceptual levels: primary stakeholders (the intended beneficiaries) and institutional stakeholders (the actors in civil society and government).

**Primary stakeholders.** These are the poor of the country in question, however defined. The challenge of participation in this sense is to "give voice" to the poor (including all the diverse social groups within that category) in the Poverty Assessment. The premise is that involving the poor in the process will contribute to ensuring that the strategies identified for poverty reduction will reflect the priorities and obstacles to progress as seen by the poor themselves.

**Institutional stakeholders.** Participation in this sense is seen in terms of the key stakeholders within the government and civil society whose support and cooperation will be essential to making the strategy which emerges from the PA process as effective as possible. These institutional stakeholders include:

- officials of government ministries;
- other significant groups in civil society involved in implementing government policies, such as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) playing a major role in service delivery, and other donor organizations;
- organizations outside government fulfilling functions of representation or advocacy on behalf of beneficiary groups (NGOs and churches); and
- opinion leaders and independent analysts with a significant contribution to make at an analytical level or in terms of supporting the Poverty Assessment process (such as academics and journalists).

In dealing with institutional stakeholders, the aim of participation is to promote consensus, ownership and commitment to the analytical conclusions and strategy identified among the key actors whose support will be necessary for successful implementation.

Task managers have faced widely varying country conditions as they have prepared PAs and other poverty focused sector work. At one end of the spectrum, the country working environment has consisted of the best conditions: government officials interested in and committed to poverty reduction and open to dialogue with other sections of society; good data sources; high quality local researchers; and adequate resources and time to complete the PA. At the opposite end of the spectrum, task managers have faced the worst working conditions: limited government interest or outright opposition to discuss poverty; lack of local researcher counterparts; and tight time deadlines and serious resource constraints for completing the PA. In practice, most task managers have found themselves working in country circumstances somewhere between these two extremes. Different kinds of conditions pose different kinds of constraints. Lack of borrower government interest in the Poverty Assessment process, for example, poses a major constraint to institutional stakeholder participation, but even under such conditions a PPA may still make a useful contribution to the Poverty Assessment. An analysis of the specific constraints and opportunities for stakeholder participation in any given country context is a useful first stage for any task manager planning to initiate a Poverty Assessment.
2. Primary Stakeholders: Giving Voice to the Poor in the Preparation of Poverty Assessments

An effective poverty strategy needs to be implicitly or explicitly endorsed by the intended beneficiaries so that it reflects the concerns voiced by the poor. This entails gaining systematic understanding of the poor and the institutions with which they interact. While central data gathering and dialogue with government and other institutional stakeholders remain key elements for undertaking a poverty assessment, the rationale for using social assessment methodologies, including Participatory Poverty Assessments is that the results can help to complement, inform or validate conclusions drawn from other kinds of more traditional Bank analysis. In particular, participatory research methods can illuminate aspects of the processes (social, environmental and economic) by which poverty is produced and reproduced, thereby providing a significant complement to the study of statistical outcomes in conventional Bank poverty analysis.

Methodological Issues and Research Design

Such terms as "beneficiary assessment," "systematic client consultation," "Participatory Poverty Assessment," "Participatory Rural Appraisal," and "qualitative assessment" have been used interchangeably by Bank staff to describe a number of different kinds of data gathering and decisionmaking approaches. The use of participatory methodologies, in fact, represents a wide continuum of potential involvement by beneficiaries and stakeholders. These range from joint decisionmaking on selection of policies or budgetary allocations (more often associated with project activities) to having the poor or other stakeholder groups "participate" through various kinds of data gathering and consultative mechanisms in order to determine their perceptions toward poverty, vulnerability, coping mechanisms, and government services. For most Poverty Assessments, the approaches employed with primary stakeholders thus far have fallen at this latter (and weaker) end of the participatory spectrum.

A second point to recognize is that the various methodologies employed are actually built around many of the same core techniques which have been refined to "fit" the specific methodology. These core techniques include conversational and semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and participant observation. For example, both beneficiary assessments and participatory rapid appraisal generally involve forms of focus group, semi-structured and conversational interviewing.

Box 1
Countries Where PPAs Have Been/Are Being Currently Undertaken (as of March 95)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Argentina</th>
<th>Ecuador</th>
<th>Mozambique</th>
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<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
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<td>Rwanda *</td>
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<td>Republic</td>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>Uganda *</td>
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<td>Mali *</td>
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<td>Zambia</td>
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* Rapid Poverty Assessment (less than one month of fieldwork.)
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Box 2
Burkina Faso: The Poor Photographing "Poverty"

The PPA component of the Burkina Faso assessment included three separate parts: one on urban poverty, one on rural poverty, and a cross-sectoral prise de conscience. For this last element, an interesting variation on the focus group interviewing technique was used. Simple "point and shoot" cameras were lent to various members in three representative communities, who were then asked to take pictures of what they thought constituted poverty in their respective community. The cameras were handed out to men, women and children, none of whom had ever used a camera before. The films were then developed locally, and the prints shown and distributed for discussion by the community, and later shared with some of the country’s senior policymakers.

Participatory Rapid Appraisal also includes a wide range of semi-structured techniques which allow the participants to generate their own analyses of key elements of their livelihoods. These techniques include participatory thematic mapping, wealth ranking, preference ranking and scoring and institutional diagramming. (See References for a listing of resource materials which outline in detail some of the techniques and methods listed here.)

Generally speaking, the methodology chosen for specific PPAs has been derived in an ad hoc manner, based on the PPA task manager’s estimation of in-country capability, his/her own academic or professional experience, and the expected output and fit of the PPA in the overall Poverty Assessment. Whereas PPAs have mostly focused on the poor, in some cases a broader range of social actors have participated in the research. In Madagascar, for example, institutional stakeholders at various levels—social service providers, government officials, middlemen, and exporters—were consulted in order to identify the problems and constraints they face in their day-to-day work.

In addition to the issue of selection of field research methods the task manager should be aware that there are a number of other issues in the research design for a PPA which are at least as important for achieving a coherent and usable result. These include:

- **Developing clear objectives**, which are complementary to other parts of the Poverty Assessment and which are achievable given the existing resource, timing and institutional constraints.

  - **Selecting an appropriate institution** within the country to manage the PPA, whether governmental, nongovernmental or academic. Criteria for selection of research institutions include: logistical capacity to mount a research exercise generally at short notice and usually involving more than one field team; experience with participatory and qualitative research methods; capacity to analyze, synthesize and process the field results into policy relevant inputs (in collaboration with other consultants and Bank staff). Sometimes these functions may be separated; for example, in Ghana, the field research is managed by a national NGO, while the lead researcher is an academic sociologist who has been contracted separately.

  - **Selecting members for the research teams.** There are a number of possible approaches here. In some cases (for example Zambia) it has been possible to use an already established research team, while in other cases teams have been assembled specifically for the task. In some cases the institution selected to manage the PPA will supply all of the researchers, while in others researchers with a diverse range of experience may be brought together on a temporary basis. Use of professional and experienced researchers may simplify the tasks of training the researchers and producing
Primary Stakeholders

analytical outputs. Involving NGO and government staff will broaden ownership and commitment and enable the teams to draw on a wide range of institutional experience in development issues. In all cases, an appropriate balance should be sought in terms of gender, regional background, and capability in local languages. In the Africa Region, where the use of these methodologies is relatively new to the countries concerned, the PPA process has generated a great deal of local interest among various stakeholder groups, including other donor agencies. In Kenya, for example, the Central Bureau of Statistics was so impressed with the potential of the PPA that it volunteered staff and hoped to carry on with and develop its own similar methodology, after the PPA was finished. In Zambia, a participatory assessment component based on the local capacity and methods developed during the PPA is being incorporated into an ongoing poverty monitoring system functioning at the national level.

- Designing appropriate training which can orient the teams and provide them with adequate opportunity to develop skills in the research methods which have been selected, and to learn to apply those skills to the specific agenda of a PPA. Where there is a broad range of people in the research teams, with different skills and from different institutions (NGOs, government staff, academics), a rigorous training input is vital to generate a unified and coherent approach among the teams. The composition of the research teams has implications for the training input and methodology selected. Where the teams are composed of experienced researchers with a background in a common approach, the task manager may choose methods with which the group is familiar. The PRA approach, on the other hand, has a strong tradition of building team cohesion among diverse multi-disciplinary groups, and may therefore be appropriate where teams include a substantial proportion of policymakers and development practitioners without extensive research experience.

- Selecting field sites and research participants. Different field research methodologies may have different requirements in terms of selection of field sites and areas. The PRA tradition, for example, places considerable emphasis on community level analysis through group based analytical exercises, while PPAs based on beneficiary assessment methods have tended to concentrate on household level interviews.

Selection of field sites in PPAs which have attempted national coverage has generally been oriented toward representing a range of the different "livelihood systems" and conditions in poor urban and rural communities. This method for selection of sites for participatory research is sometimes referred to as "purposive sampling". The expertise of key informants and specialists is used to select field sites through a range of different criteria. A secondary issue then becomes assuring the representativeness of sites selected to cover particular livelihood systems (for example, agropastoralism among a given ethnic group). One possible strategy (not yet tested in the field) is to follow up in-depth research in a given site with rapid appraisal validation in other communities to check that the priority issues in terms of poverty that have been identified in the study site also apply in other similar communities.

Identification of research participants within poor rural and urban communities is a major methodological challenge. In contrast to national level household surveys, which seek a statistically representative sample drawn from all income groups, the in-depth qualitative fieldwork necessary for a PPA has to focus on the poor. The issue of sampling and selection of participants is hence less a question of finding a representative sample of households nationally than finding a representative sample of the poor. The question "Who are the poor?" is
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therefore both an issue of substance for a PPA (enriching the understanding of poverty by looking at local perceptions and understandings of what it means to be poor) and an issue of method. Identification of "the poor" is an issue which all PPAs have to face in the course of field research. Some of the methods which have been either tried or proposed for use in the field include:

- wealth ranking and social mapping (PRA methods);
- development of rapid appraisal indicators (such as lack of a granary, materials and conditions of housing);
- integration with household survey results to find households defined as poor according to national level consumption data (feasible only where the timing of a household survey and of the PPA allows for such integration).

Two major points should be noted in relation to the issue of identifying the poor for the purposes of a PPA. First, this is a much more significant issue in highly differentiated urban and rural communities than it is in poor, small rural communities. In the marginal, isolated and poorer regions of most countries there are communities where all members would be classified as "poor" in any national policy framework. However, poor urban communities often include a wide range of incomes and wealth categories. Relatively wealthy rural communities (in resource rich cash crop producing areas, for example) may also include large groups of the poor who do not control sufficient resources in terms of land and labor to benefit

Box 3
Selection of Sites in Four Participatory Poverty Assessments

Both the Ghana and Zambia PPAs used methods predominantly derived from Participatory Rapid Appraisal with a strong focus on community level dimensions of the experience of poverty. Field sites were selected by experienced local researchers to represent a variety of communities differentiated by:

- rural/urban characteristics
- mode of livelihood (farming, fishing, pastoralism etc.)
- cultural/ethnic group
- agroecological zone
- level of access to infrastructure and services
- level of integration with markets

A further factor that influenced site selection in the Ghana case was the existence of appropriate 'entry points' for dialogue with the communities. Where a member of one of the research teams was part of a development program which was operational in the community this greatly assisted the quality of interaction and participation in the research.

In the case of the Kenya PPA, the starting point for selection of sampling procedures for the rural areas was to focus on methods and criteria which would enhance the credibility of PPA findings in the eyes of central planners and the statisticians of the Central Bureau of Statistics. To achieve this end, the cluster sampling framework of the national Welfare Monitoring Survey (WMS) was used and the statisticians were involved in the process of village selection. Since the priority was understanding the perspectives of the poor, based on the WMS data five of the poorest districts were chosen, one from each of the southern provinces. District cluster maps were used to randomly select five villages from each cluster.

In Tanzania, the national master sample framework of the Central Statistical Office was used to identify 100 rural communities. Within those communities the same 15 households as were interviewed for the Agricultural Census Survey will be the focus for household level methods of investigation, in order to achieve a high level of integration between quantitative and qualitative approaches.
Box 4
Local Perceptions of Poverty: Results from the Ghana Participatory Poverty Assessment

The Ghana PPA was carried out in three phases, and used predominantly methods drawn from the Participatory Rural Appraisal 'toolkit'. The research teams included staff of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, staff from Ghanaian NGOs and academic researchers. On the issue of local perceptions of poverty, the results from wealth ranking exercises and other interviews indicated that in all of the communities studied there were clear conceptions of states of wealth and well being. The criteria for assessing these were highly locally specific. It is possible nonetheless to identify some generic characteristics from these bottom-up perspectives:

- Participants were anxious to distinguish between the poor who could feed themselves and their families, and the poorest who were destitute and in some cases totally dependent on transfers from kin and other community members. One determinant that received consistent emphasis in all sites was disability or infirmity. In this category was placed mentally ill people who could not fend for themselves, handicapped people, old people who could no longer work (and lacked networks of kin for support), and generally weak (sick, not healthy) people.

- In rural areas with immigrant communities poor migrant farmers tended to be seen as a class apart. In the absence of sufficient cash to gain secure access to land, these households or individuals are dependent on unfavorable forms of access to land (such as share-cropping). Many lack not just economic means, but access to social assets, including supportive kin networks as well.

- There is reluctance to label people (specific individuals/households) as ‘poor’ in most communities, especially rural communities. This is related to the connotations of destitution and dependence referred to above. Individuals who are perceived as full members of rural communities (that is, able to participate in the social and economic life of the community) by definition cannot be poor.

- The degrading nature of poverty in terms of implications for self-respect and status are often mitigated by stressing the transient dimension of poverty: both wealth and poverty are frequently conceived as potentially dynamic and transient conditions. At the level of the community or group, a (transient) general condition of poverty may be seen as prevailing at periods of seasonal stress, especially in rural areas.

- At the level of the household or individual, poverty is often seen in terms of a ‘vulnerability crisis’ model. The non-poor are those who can ‘solve their problems’. Critical to this is the level of support from kin and community that an individual can draw on.

- Secure access to food, income and adequate housing emerged as major dimensions in local poverty criteria. Ability to access social services also emerged as a major feature of definitions of wealth and poverty in all sites. In terms of health this was generally perceived as capacity to pay - in terms of education other factors were also involved (especially the opportunity cost of the child’s labor for either agricultural production, income generation or domestic labor).

The research also highlighted differences in perceptions of conditions of poverty according to different social groups, genders, urban and rural populations, and people from different regions.

The second major point to note is that approaches to identifying the poor fall into two broad categories: those that depend on the local perceptions of poverty (such as wealth ranking), and those that are based on outsiders’ perceptions (use of questionnaire survey results). Either approach may be justifiable (or some combination of the two), but researchers should be clear about which approach is being used as the results may differ.
Uses and Applications of PPA Methodologies

Some potential uses of how PPA tools can be used in the various components of a Poverty Assessment are given below.

Enriching the Poverty Profile

To date, this is the area where PPAs have most commonly focused. The assumption is that quantitative measures such as household income and expenditures and socioeconomic indicators (mortality, morbidity, nutritional status, educational attainment) provide necessary but insufficient information about the poor. Such measures give an important but only partial explanation of who the poor are and why they are poor. They reveal virtually nothing about the poor’s perceptions about their own predicament.

PPAs can help to fill these gaps by providing key information about the location specific nature of poverty, including, for example, information on gender or ethnic discrimination, environmental or economic vulnerabilities, physical isolation, seasonal aspects of poverty, family or other social obligations, and local perceptions of what constitutes poverty. In short, PPA tools can enrich the poverty profile by pinpointing significant characteristics about poor households and communities, and the perceived constraints which reinforce their deprivation in specific physical and socioeconomic environments. These characteristics might not otherwise be factored into more conventional analysis using only household survey data and government statistics. At a more fundamental level, local perceptions of the nature of poverty and vulnerability can also help illuminate the conceptualization of poverty that underpins the poverty profile.

Perceptions of the Poor on Accessibility and Relevance of Services

Public expenditure reviews (PERs) have been the most common instrument for tracking a government’s commitment to expanding access to basic services (for all groups, not just the poor). PERs have commonly highlighted the need for increasing a government’s overall aggregate allocations to the social sectors, and for increasing the relative amounts going to those services which have the most benefit for the poor.

Box 5

Madagascar: Access to Education for the Poor

The Madagascar PPA comprised three separate reports based on interviews with 2,582 households and roughly 100 additional interviews with community leaders, service providers and government officials. Access to education emerged as a major theme from the research. Summary conclusions included:

"The reasons people do not send their children to school are: (a) they find school too expensive—primarily monthly tuition charges and the costs of school materials, textbooks, paper, pens, etc.; (b) the school curriculum is not adapted to the reality of day-to-day life; (c) both physical plant and teachers are insufficient—often more than 80 students in one class; (d) the preparation and overall bearing of the teachers is not satisfactory (frequent absenteeism, lack of readiness for class instruction, shoddy appearance—mainly due to very low remuneration); and (e) the distance of many schools (5 to 10 kilometers) from places of residence. Due to these reasons, one third (562 out of 1672) of the children in the households sampled in the Tulear-South region who had been in school in the 1991-92 period dropped out in the 1992-93 period."

"Recommendations of the people for improving the educational system include: (a) providing pedagogical support to the teachers; (b) revalue the function of teaching, through increasing salaries and otherwise raising the social status of the teaching profession; (c) provide schools with pedagogic materials; (d) create professional/vocational schools adapted to needs of the labor market; (e) support school lunch programs; (f) adapt the curriculum to the Malagache culture; and (g) support the initiatives of parent-teacher associations, particularly as regards quality control over teachers and school construction."
poor, notably primary health and education. Even when expenditure data are readily available, however, a PER can only answer supply side questions about the allocation and expected outcomes of these expenditures.

It is equally important to understand the demand side (why the poor do or do not use existing services). PPAAs can provide insights into the poor's perceptions on priorities in service delivery, on quality of service, cost and affordability, as well as poor peoples' rationale on why or when relevant services will or will not be used. For example, factors restricting access to schooling may include the need for child labor to supplement the household's income. Participatory research can also look at how the poor access services. Is the state the major provider of most significant services, or are NGOs, community based organizations and church groups or other religious organizations playing a major role in providing services to the poor?

Factor Markets

Land, labor and capital markets have a direct and obvious bearing on the lives of the poor. The potential of the poor to successfully participate in these markets is critical for their efforts to move out of poverty. Understanding the functioning of these markets is therefore essential for prescriptive policy purposes. Such analysis will be most productive when it is able to ascertain social, environmental and political factors which affect the ability of particular categories of the poor to benefit from them. In the case of labor markets, for example, there are a number of non-wage related factors which affect why the poor will or will not enter a particular labor market or seek certain employment opportunities. There are always differences based on gender, ethnicity and age which affect the degree to which different groups participate in labor markets. To take one example, the labor burden of women in terms of a wide range of domestic tasks (such as childcare, drawing water, fetching fuelwood, and food preparation) places major restrictions on their ability to access employment opportunities, whether through migration or in their home communities. In the case of land, in much of rural Africa access to land does not come primarily through the market, but through membership in particular social institutions (kin groups, communities) by which different categories of people acquire rights to use and control natural resources. The operation of these systems may exclude women, and generational and ethnic groups from control over key resources.

Economic and Regulatory Framework

Social assessment methods can help to analyze information on the poor's attitudes toward such issues as tax policy, use of credit, and government regulations affecting the informal private sector. One important issue is to determine the poor's perceptions about the costs imposed by bureaucratic regulatory processes and the power relationships which may keep inefficient or restrictive regulations and policies in place. In many countries, for example, public distrust of the formal banking system is a common problem where the population has little confidence in the safety of their money in any formal banking structure. While the economic outcomes of the lack of confidence are often understood, little attempt is made to understand the problems the poor encounter in using and accessing financial services and how these difficulties might be addressed through modifying regulations and procedures. In the Guinea-Bissau poverty assessment, interviews conducted by a local sociologist revealed that virtually no poor household viewed the formal banking or credit system as potential sources of credit or finance. Friends and relatives, or alternatively informal credit systems were the only sources of potential financial support that could be counted on. Bureaucratic restrictions on petty trading and the operation of small-scale enterprises from the home are often a major constraint for poor urban households.

Survival Strategies and Social Safety Nets

In many developing countries, the poor fall outside the scope of formal governmental safety net provisions, if they exist at all. For

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Box 6
Survival Strategies in Rural Communities in Zambia

The PPA examined the strategies used by poor rural communities in six areas of Zambia to cope with various kinds of 'shocks' and seasonal stress points. Only one form of official governmental 'safety net' was found to have brought significant benefits to the poor: this was the emergency feeding program that covered most of Zambia during the 1992 drought. The functioning of this safety net was found to be variable by region. In those parts of the country where the system had worked well many of the poor expressed the view that they had been better off during the drought than in a normal year as a result of the food for work program. Exemptions from the requirement of working on local projects in order to receive food for the infirm and the aged were particularly highly valued within the communities as a whole. Aside from food aid other forms of survival strategies applying to stress periods included:

- 'piecwork' (generally informal 'food-for-work' exchanges on the farms of better-off rural producers)
- sale of assets (predominantly animals, although farm implements and other assets were sold in many instances)
- use of alternative foodstuffs ('famine foods' foraged from the bush)
- making increased use of common property or open access resources (for example in communities where fishing is part of the livelihood system, poorer households can turn to this if unable to farm effectively)
- 'begging'/relying on relatives: cited in all field sites as a survival strategy, this response also indicates the functioning of the community and kinship based systems of support for the vulnerable. Forms of support from kin and community members often included: help with provision of food, medical costs, construction of housing for the vulnerable (sometimes organized on the basis of communal labor), and loaning production inputs (especially bullocks for plough cultivation).
- changing to drought resistant crops, or crops which reduce seasonal vulnerability by supplying food during the 'lean' periods of the year.
- changing to crops which have lower production costs

In general, the ability of households and communities to withstand periods of stress and difficulty was found to be related to the following types of assets:

- human assets within the household: health of household members and capacity of the farming labor force.
- social/political networks: capacity to make claims on kin and community members outside the household; capacity to make claims on government and nongovernment agencies, especially in periods of stress
- material assets within the household: including both productive assets and 'stores of value' (especially animal holdings)
- community level assets: the natural resource endowment of the community: access to social infrastructure and service delivery; transport infrastructure

these poor people, informal safety net institutions of kinship and community provide a vital framework of mutual aid and support, which can vary considerably for different age, gender, and community structures. An understanding of how such informal networks function, and of coping strategies that individual, households and communities use when facing crises (illness, debt, drought) can assist policymakers in the formulation of appropriate and feasible support. In the same fashion, useful insight can be gained into the provision of formal safety nets in order to determine if such services are effectively used by the poor, and to understand to what extent recipients change their coping strategies while benefiting from these formal safety nets.

Community Organization

Any successful poverty strategy must invariably work through local community-based organizational structures if positive change is to be owned and sustained by affected social
groups. PPA methodologies can shed light on how community decisions are reached and implemented, how diverse community members view the effectiveness and representativeness of existing community associations, how the poor are viewed and treated by the community as a whole, and what might be the best alternatives for delivering government supported services. Many PPAs have also stressed the importance of assets which apply at the level of the community as a whole in determining the possibilities open to the poor for improving their security of livelihood. Conditions of access roads, the natural resource endowment of the community, and physical access to social infrastructure (wells, schools, clinics) are all examples of areas where community based organization must play a significant role in managing significant assets which are essential to the livelihoods of the poor.

**The Policy Impact of PPAs**

Policy impacts of specific PPAs can be difficult to measure. The PPA is only one of a number of influences on the recommendations of the main document of a Poverty Assessment. In turn, the Poverty Assessment itself influences policy, but in many cases it is only one of a number of factors that influence any specific policy change. The ultimate influence on policy of a specific PPA takes time to evaluate. Most of the PPAs which are described here have not reached the point where such an evaluation can be effectively made. Zambia forms an interesting exception, in part because it was the first national scale PPA to be completed, and in part because the Country Department is in the process of evaluating the policy impact of this and other policy related research exercises that have been carried out over the last three years.

**Box 7**

**Women’s Groups in Rural Kenya**

In the Participatory Poverty Assessment in Kenya during discussions of coping strategies at the individual, group and community level, women’s self-help groups received frequent mention in every district. Mini-case studies on the functioning of these groups across the country largely support the conclusion of the national survey of women’s groups and highlight important policy conclusions. The following findings emerged about women’s groups:

- Every village had more than one active or defunct women’s group
- Women’s groups were financially more prosperous in the medium and high potential agricultural areas. In the poorer areas, women’s groups pooled resources for basic survival and petty trading. The majority of the groups felt constrained by their limited financial resources.
- Most groups levied membership fees and monthly contributions.
- Membership in women’s groups was an important part of coping strategies particularly for female headed households
- In addition to income generation, two welfare activities were frequent objectives of groups: raising cash to pay school fees and to meet hospital expenses; some groups assisted with transport costs to bring the dead back to the villages for burial.
- While the poor were excluded when membership fees were high (over Ksh.100 per month) many women’s groups targeted their activities specifically to the poor — particularly in terms of assistance with food, school fees and housing construction.
- Women’s groups often had men as members, were often formed along clan or kinship lines and frequently emerge from existing collective action community groups. Generally they were supported by village men and the community at large.
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In the case of the Zambia Participatory Poverty Assessment, the impact on the Poverty Assessment was clearly strong, especially on the Action Plan. Specific elements which influenced the Action Plan included the stress on rural infrastructure investments (roads and water), and on urban services (mainly water supply). Other parts of the Poverty Assessment which drew heavily on the findings of the PPA included the Poverty Profile (especially for community based identification of the very poor) and the chapter dealing with coping strategies, safety nets and targeted interventions.

The task manager for the PA, Steen Jorgensen, gave the following assessment of the overall impact of the Zambia Participatory Poverty Assessment on policy formulation in Zambia to date:

- ongoing discussions on the sectoral emphasis of the Bank lending program with the government have been influenced by the priorities expressed by the poor in ranking exercises in the PPA (through reinforcing the current emphasis on agriculture and health, stressing the importance of rural infrastructure and environment issues to the poor, and emphasizing ongoing problems with the delivery of education services);

- the Ministry of Health has been using the results of the PPA and the Poverty Assessment as a whole extensively in policy development (for example, one of the authors of the PPA has been participating in a committee looking into the issue of exemption from user fees for the poor; and a problem identified in the PPA of hostile attitudes and behavior of health staff in relation to clients from poor rural communities is being addressed through training);

- observations from the PPA related to the timing of school fee payments (which coincide with the period of maximum seasonal stress for most rural communities) have contributed to ongoing work in the education ministry on school fees (a new policy is in preparation which will address these issues);

- the very positive feedback from communities in the PPA on the functioning of the emergency safety net during the southern Africa drought of 1992 influenced policy recommendations on ongoing provision for the vulnerable in the Poverty Assessment.

In recognition of the value of the PPA's findings for policy formulation a second exercise has been carried out by the same teams for which results are still in preparation. The objectives of this second study were to update the results of the PPA and to monitor the impact of some of the policy measures implemented under the Economic and Social Adjustment Credit. Plans are also currently in preparation to build the participatory poverty assessment approach into an ongoing poverty monitoring system to be supported under the Second Social Recovery Project.

The Management of Participatory Poverty Assessments

The logistics and managerial inputs involved in PPAs undertaken thus far have varied enormously. Time and availability of funds have been the two most important variables. Some PPAs have cost less than $15,000 and entailed ten days of field work (Uganda, Mali); others have cost over $100,000 and required several months to complete from initial training of field teams to final report writing (Zambia, Madagascar, Ghana, Kenya). Obviously, the level of resourcing and time available has major implications for the scale of coverage that can be achieved in terms of:

- the size of the sample (number of households, individuals, communities which participate in the research)
- the geographical "spread" (number of regions, different systems of livelihood, agroecological zones covered by the research)
Box 8
Lessons Learned from the Zambia PPA

Methodology
The Task Manager for the Zambia Poverty Assessment identified the following as areas where the PPA provided inputs of high value in policy formulation:

- priority ranking exercises carried out with the poor provided extremely valuable insights when addressing issues of cross-sectoral balance in the Poverty Assessment (and particularly the Action Plan); consistent messages were generated from these exercises which created a convincing composite picture of the priorities of the rural and urban poor in relation to public policy;
- information on seasonal dimensions of poverty generated by seasonality diagramming exercises provided valuable insights on dynamic dimensions of poverty which covered issues such as income and expenditure, health status and food security;
- information on the coping and survival strategies of the poor from semi-structured interviews and ranking exercises provided an invaluable basis for generating appropriate policies for provision for vulnerable households and communities;
- wealth ranking exercises produced strong and consistent messages on the characteristics by which communities identified the ultra poor (including gender, age, disability, and lack of adult children). In policy terms the lesson which emerged was that while care of the ultra poor was generally regarded as an issue for community based action, large-scale vulnerability (whether to seasonal stress or shocks such as drought) was seen as a sphere where policy response and planning was essential.

Process
In terms of the process of carrying out the PPA the following points were identified which assisted the PPA in producing an impact:

- in the preparation of the Poverty Assessment as a whole key policy messages were 'triangulated with other sources of information and other forms of analysis (for example a quantitative model of household agricultural production reinforced the PPA’s message that investments which reduce the labor burden of women have a very high level of benefit for the rural poor);
- the decision to focus the policy messages of the Poverty Assessment as a whole through preparation of an Action Plan meant that addressing the balance of sectoral spending priorities was critical: the kinds of information the PPA provided on the priorities of the poor were an invaluable source for making these judgements;
- the fact that the group of researchers already knew each other and had some comparable experience was helpful, as was the fact that the Country Department within the Bank had been using beneficiary consultation methods for some time and therefore had a prior sense of commitment to the exercise and the results it produced.

A number of areas were highlighted where with hindsight the methodology and process of the PPA could have been improved:

- the PPA was much stronger on eliciting priorities at the local level than on outlining the institutional mechanisms by which identified needs and problems could be resolved - a stronger focus on institutional issues would have increased policy impact;
- work on the PPA was carried out in parallel with other inputs to the PA; if the PPA had been completed before the main mission then institutional issues in service delivery could have been followed up for the precise areas which the PPA suggested were priorities;
- in hindsight the use of some methods could have been sharpened to improve policy relevance; for example investigating local perceptions of trends on specific issues such as food marketing would have improved the analysis of trends in livelihoods within the PPA.
Box 9
Cameroon: Managing a PPA - Lessons from the Field

The process of implementation of the Cameroon PPA yielded a number of lessons in terms of field management.

- **Training is essential to quality of the PPA.** To provide exposure to research in qualitative techniques especially techniques in compiling, collating and analyzing of the qualitative data. Training workshops can also serve to forge a common vision and understanding of the objectives of PPA and its links to the PA and policy.

- **Mid-Way Progress Review.** The mid-progress review was useful in clarifying and correcting a number of issues that had emerged at the first stage of the study, specifically to correct sampling techniques, streamline the supervision function, establish a report outline to guide preparation of the regional reports, review the budget, assess expenditures, and establish some guidelines for the use and remuneration of researchers in the field.

- **Guidelines for Field Work Conditions of Researchers.** The experience from the Cameroon PPA suggests that some guidelines for terms and conditions can decrease the tensions between research agencies squeezed for funds and ensuring good quality work from the researchers. The key is to ensure transparency from the beginning regarding payment of salaries, the number of days to be remunerated for work (including time to and from study site), detailing provisions to be covered under overhead costs (obligatory gifts to villagers, first aid kit and medicine (drugs) for malaria). This is especially important because the researchers are not covered by insurance and one bout of malaria can cost over half a days wage.

- the agenda for the research, both in terms of the "breadth" of issues covered and the "depth" of coverage.

Firm guidelines in terms of the minimum levels of resourcing necessary to produce different kinds of output are difficult to provide. Clearly the resource requirements will vary according to factors such as: geographical and population size of the country in question; diversity of cultures and living conditions; costs of hiring competent local researchers; and the training and other demands of the research methods that are used. As a general guide, however, short rapid appraisal exercises in a single region of a country will be unlikely to yield much in terms of policy recommendations unless they are carried out in order to research a specific issue which has emerged as a priority in the background work for the poverty assessment as a whole. If a short exercise of this kind is the only option available due to restrictions of time or resources then it may still be worth carrying out in order to provide illustrative material and testimony on the local experience of poverty.

Alternatively, a task manager faced with major time and resource constraints might decide to prioritize other activities, for example:

- funding a consultative process with institutional stakeholders that have constituencies among the poor (NGOs, some religious groups);

- carrying out a review of the results of relevant participatory and anthropological studies carried out among different groups of the poor; and

- contracting individual researchers.

On this latter point, not all PPA activities have consisted of multimember mobile field teams visiting several communities. An alternative or complementary approach has been to arrange research contracts with individual researchers to assess more narrowly defined topics. In Brazil, a local sociologist and anthropologist were contracted to prepare a paper on the social conditions of the poor in Northeast Brazil. In Nigeria, a series of qualitative micro-studies
have been carried out on a range of issues judged to be of special relevance to the Poverty Assessment as a whole. These issues include access to social services for the poor, intrahousehold dimensions of poverty, the urban informal sector, and the impact on the poor of rapid price changes in recent years. Taken in total the Nigeria "Qualitative Poverty Assessment" has similar scope and coverage to the larger PPAs listed here.

In order to achieve reasonable coverage for a national scale exercise which attempts to investigate a broad range of issues among a cross-section of different social, ethnic and livelihood groups in, for example, a medium sized African country, experience to date suggests that $100,000-$150,000 would be a fair indication of appropriate resources. There is as yet no experience of carrying out PPAs in countries with extremely large populations (for example, India and China). Aside from the

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**Box 10**

**Steps in Organizing a PPA**

**Selecting Technical Support:** In practice most task managers responsible for organizing a Poverty Assessment have commenced work on a Participatory Poverty Assessment by locating a senior social scientist (whether within the World Bank or outside) to take responsibility for following the exercise through to completion. Among the social scientists within the World Bank who have worked on Participatory Poverty Assessments are: Gibwa Kajubi, ENVSP (Cameroon); Deepa Narayan, ENVSP (Kenya, Tanzania); Miranda Munro, ENVSP (Tanzania); Andy Norton, AFTHR (Zambia, Ghana, South Africa); Dan Owen, AF6PH (Zambia, Mozambique); Lawrence Salmen, ENVSP (Cameroon, Madagascar, Guatemala); Maurizia Tovo, AFIPH (Rapid Poverty Assessments in Mali, Benin, Uganda).

**Identifying Objectives, Methodology, Research Agenda:** Carried out in collaboration between the Task manager and social scientist responsible for research design. Different combinations of methods are better adapted to looking at different issues. As experience develops with completed PPAs, task managers will be in a better position to make informed decisions about appropriate methods, though technical advice will generally be needed from researchers experienced in participatory methods.

**Identifying Institutions and Researchers within the Country:** Generally carried out by the task manager in collaboration with the social scientist responsible for technical support. Some combination of academic researchers, NGO staff and staff of government agencies has been used on most PPAs. An experienced local social scientist is generally needed to follow the exercise to completion, and make a substantial input to synthesizing the conclusions. A competent local organization is also needed to deal with the logistics of mounting a large field research exercise.

**Identifying Sources of Funding:** As noted above, most PPAs have been funded from sources outside the World Bank. A certain amount of adaptive management will probably be needed to match the field exercise to the resources available.

**Designing a Training Input:** Depending on the level of familiarity of the researchers with the methods to be used, a substantial training input may be necessary. Experience suggests that a vital and often neglected area for training teams is in systematic recording and reporting of research activities.

**Support to Implementation:** However well the research is designed, a certain amount of support and supervision will be needed while the teams are in the field.

**Analysis and Formulation of Policy Recommendations:** The analysis and synthesis of qualitative research material is a demanding and lengthy task. Care should be taken to ensure that attention is paid to documenting and recording the research results, and that a certain amount of analysis of results is carried out in the field. In addition, sufficient analytical inputs from local researchers, as well as social scientists with experience of policy formulation at the level of development agencies such as the World Bank, should be gathered.
question of funding, the time requirements for fieldwork and synthesis of results would clearly be immense in these cases.

Sources of funding for PPAs have varied considerably. In three Poverty Assessments (Madagascar, Guinea, Central African Republic), the PPA was financed out of ongoing IDA projects. In most other cases, the more extensive PPAs required cofinancing from other multilateral and/or bilateral donors. The British Overseas Development Administration, the Dutch Poverty Trust Fund, the Swedish International Development Agency, GTZ, UNICEF, and the Canadian International Development Agency have been the most generous PPA cofinanciers.

Limitations of PPAs and Problems Encountered

The agenda for participatory poverty assessments is very ambitious. Generally speaking a piece of work is undertaken which has a cross-sectoral agenda and seeks to generate findings relevant to policy on a national scale within a period of less than nine months. If the PPA is seen as a magic solution that can somehow compensate for a general vacuum in terms of data and poverty focused analytical work, it is likely to disappoint. Many of the questions which outside analysts want answered cannot be addressed with participatory research methods, which are adapted to eliciting insider perceptions rather than tracking what outside analysts see as key elements of change.

Task managers should be aware that participatory research methods, for all that they can provide a new and important perspective on the issue of poverty, cannot necessarily compensate for gaps in more conventional forms of data required for various kinds of poverty analytical work carried out in the Bank. Similarly, it is important not to overload the research agenda with a large number of issues for which there may be a demand for information for the overall poverty assessment. This was one of the major problems observed by task managers who had been involved with PPAs. In retrospect most felt that the richness of the results would have been greater if the research focus had been narrower.

The other common problem raised was a tendency to underestimate the time required to synthesize the various field site reports into a single document containing summary findings and conclusions (and policy recommendations). Experience also suggests that a substantial degree of support is needed from a social scientist experienced in working on policy issues when research teams are working on the final synthesis of results.
3. Working with Institutional Stakeholders

Just as the poor, as the primary beneficiaries, will be the intended recipients and ultimate arbitrators of the appropriateness of poverty reduction efforts, it is the institutional stakeholders who are responsible for translating poverty reduction policies into programs and services, with or without support from Bank staff. These stakeholders range from the level of senior policymakers in government, through a variety of actors in civil society, all the way to service providers and development workers at the village level who have the most day-to-day contact with the poor.

For purposes of the PA process, there are essentially four steps or points where participatory approaches among institutional stakeholders can occur. Such interaction can take place in:

- defining and shaping the research agenda;
- undertaking the analytical work once the research agenda is set;
- formulating the policy prescriptions and strategies based on the outcomes of the analysis and research; and
- disseminating the results and policy proposals for purposes of achieving consensus and ownership.

Defining the Research Agenda

The scope of analysis and degree of participatory involvement in establishing the research agenda have varied considerably from one poverty assessment to another. Generally speaking, the amount of joint collaboration in setting the research agenda has been influenced by factors defined by the Bank and by circumstances within the country, including the following:

On the Bank's Side

Is the poverty assessment linked to other sector work such as a Country Economic Memorandum or a PER? As might be expected, stand-alone PAs have demonstrated greater latitude in setting the scope of analysis, thereby allowing greater potential for participation through freedom from blueprint approaches.

What are the time and resource constraints to complete the Poverty Assessment? In the first round of Poverty Assessments (completed in FY93 and before), task managers reported facing tight deadlines for completing their work by the end of the fiscal year, which in many cases seriously limited their ability to undertake discussions with government officials and other institutional stakeholders about alternative research issues.

Is there precedent in previous CESW of joint Bank-government collaboration in defining the research agenda? If so the Poverty Assessment can benefit from a learning process on both sides about sharing responsibility for this kind of analytical work.

On the Country's Side

Are senior government officials comfortable talking about poverty from an analytical and conceptual perspective? If senior officials are comfortable in poverty discussions, then it is more likely that debate and interaction can occur not only among senior officials, but also among many levels of institutional...
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stakeholders (independent researchers, NGOs, other groups in civil society).

Are discussions of poverty a sensitive political issue in the country? If so, officials and local researchers may be circumscribed from discussing their views openly with Bank staff.

How extensive and available are survey and other kinds of poverty-related data which can help to orient and shape the research agenda? The weaker the data sources, the less likely that government officials or local researchers can be expected to engage in a substantive discussion about the range of possible poverty topics that could be analyzed.

How strong are nongovernmental institutions involved in policy research, and to what extent do they have a track record in influencing governmental policy? A strong tradition of policy dialogue between government and informed elements of civil society increases the chances that institutional stakeholders outside government can participate meaningfully in setting the research agenda.

Attempts to involve stakeholders outside the government in setting the agenda for a poverty assessment have been the exception rather than the rule. An in-country workshop with

government, independent researchers, NGOs, advocacy groups and representatives of community based organizations prior to the drafting of the Issues Paper would be a potential means to accomplish this. In the event that a participatory poverty assessment or other poverty-related analysis had been completed prior to the commencement of a poverty assessment, the earlier analyses or studies would be an ideal entry point for involving various institutional stakeholders in setting the research agenda for the Poverty Assessment as a whole.

The Special Case of the Poverty Profile

The formulation of a poverty profile (and more particularly, the establishment of a poverty line) has proven to be an issue with considerable potential for controversy. It is thus an area where close participation and agreement are required from the outset, so as to avoid later misunderstandings and possible acrimony. Government policymakers and planners, as well as Bank staff, recognize the importance of having a poverty profile and poverty line to serve as benchmarks against which progress can be measured in the fight against poverty. However, task managers need to be aware that how the profile is analyzed and where the poverty line is initially drawn can have major political implications.

Box 11
A Combined PER-PA for Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has historically shown a strong commitment to poverty reduction and equity issues even though poverty remains a formidable hurdle. The combined PER-PA undertaken for Sri Lanka drew an inter-temporal poverty profile using household surveys conducted by the Statistics Office in 1985 and 1990. The public expenditure analysis focused on health, education and the public social safety net system (income transfers). Background papers on these sectors were also prepared by local consultants. The Yellow Cover draft was discussed with government officials and academics in April 1994.

One of the important findings of the report was that the current safety net system of income transfers was too wide in coverage, resulting in many non-poor receiving transfers. At the same time, however, because of aggregate budgetary limitations on the program, the amount of transfers per household was in fact too small to have any significant impact on actual poor households' welfare. The report recommended lowering the number of beneficiaries to include only poor households, as defined by the poverty profile, in order to permit increasing poor household benefits per capita, while maintaining the same overall budget envelope.
Box 12
Institutional Stakeholder Participation: A Checklist of Issues and Activities

- What is the starting point in terms of attitudes by government to the discussion of poverty issues?
- Is there any potential for involvement of government or other institutional stakeholders as part of process of preparing the Issues Paper?
- If a Participatory Poverty Assessment is being carried out, can this process be used to facilitate involvement of key institutional stakeholders in the Poverty Assessment process as a whole (e.g. by involving government staff, research institutes, NGOs in arrangements for implementation)?
- During the course of early missions, is it feasible for the task manager and involved Bank staff to meet with a wide range of stakeholder, including:
  - local NGOs and various advocacy groups?
  - local researchers/academics?
  - other donors?
- Can an initial workshop/conference be organized to discuss with representatives of various institutional stakeholders what should be included in the poverty assessment research agenda?
- Is it feasible to meet with a representative sampling of service providers and community or district-level officials in order to elicit their views on poverty issues?
- What is the range and skills mix of local researchers and government planners/policy analysts who can become involved in the research and analysis?
- Can workshops be held with interested groups to report at various stages of the PA’s preparation on relevant findings and initial policy directions emerging from the analysis?
- How much responsibility can be devolved on to the government itself for writing its own policy agenda for poverty reduction?

Poverty profiles may involve sensitivities over the ownership of data, for example, in relation to the country’s statistical office and equal access to survey data by Bank missions, other donors, and local academics or other groups. Determining the poverty line may be even more contentious, as for example in cases where there is a history of tying the minimum wage to the poverty line in negotiations with trade unions. Likewise, deciding how and at what level the poverty line is drawn can add to, or subtract from, the numbers of poor, simply by changing the manner of calculation. Needless to say, governments don’t wish to be embarrassed by numbers based on methods of calculation with which they disagree.

This point is illustrated by the experiences of the Poverty Assessments for Poland and Indonesia. In the case of Poland, the poverty line was derived mutually by the Bank mission and the government (Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the Central Statistical Office) using the minimum retirement pension as the poverty cutoff line. Because of Poland’s longstanding interest in poverty questions, both the government and opposition political parties welcomed efforts to establish a poverty line, but subsequently interpreted the resulting data differently in order to support their own policy viewpoints. Indonesia represents a case where the government was very interested in improving its already extensive household survey system in order to fine-tune the survey methodology for better capturing poverty trends. Bank technical advice was actively solicited by the Planning Ministry and Central Statistics Office on how changes and refinements in the survey methodology could be made.
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Box 13
Contracting of Local Research Organizations

For the Brazil Poverty Assessment, the task manager contracted out several studies to Brazil's Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA). These included separate studies on a poverty profile, a poverty line, the special nature of poverty in Northeast Brazil, labor markets and the poor, nutrition, and public expenditures and social sector spending. The Issues Paper was completed only after the contracts were signed, along with precise terms of reference and expected outputs for each study.

Included in the costs of these contracts were funds to cover a series of seminars organized by IPEA on the various papers that were attended by government officials, Brazilian NGOs and academics, and other donor agencies.

Undertaking the Analytical Work

Once the research agenda is defined, task managers and their local counterparts must translate this agenda into discrete research topics capable of drawing on actual or potential data sources and available researchers and analysts. There are numerous ways this can be achieved, but generally two approaches entailing local participation, or some combination of them, have been used. Task managers have not necessarily used these approaches with participation as the end result in mind, but because they represented the most effective way to complete the task.

Contracting of Study Components to Local Researchers

This approach has involved contracting of specific reports to be prepared by local researchers. Such contracts have been drawn up with local private consulting firms, individual university researchers or university based institutes, NGOs, or semi-public think tanks. Depending on the complexity of the topic to be analyzed and the format of the report expected, such contracts have ranged from a few weeks to several months. The key variable in this approach is that the output is in the hands of the local researchers, with Bank staff involved in a supervisory, post hoc capacity.

Collaboration between Bank Staff and Local Researchers

This approach has entailed the actual analysis and report writing being done by a collaborative team of Bank staff and local researchers, including university staff, government planners, NGO officials, and local consultants. On occasion, it has also involved staff from other donors. In this approach, interaction among Bank staff and various institutional stakeholders occurs throughout the process of analysis and report writing. As a result, this approach has tended to be more time-intensive for the task manager and other Bank staff in terms of their own intellectual and supervisory input.

In choosing between these two approaches, there is nothing to suggest that one approach is inherently more participatory, or that one approach increases ownership of the finished products more than the other. In fact, some task managers have used both approaches in the same poverty assessment, based on a judgement about the best way to analyze a specific research topic. As in most cases, the country circumstances will determine which approach is more promising in which particular situation.

Regardless of the approach followed, it is also useful to broaden stakeholder participation during the process of undertaking the analytical work, by involving a larger network of persons than just those actually carrying out the analysis. This can done, for example, through:

- workshops retreats with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in order to draw on a broad range of experiences and...
perspectives in the process of preparing sections of a poverty assessment, reviewing drafts, and validating conclusions.

- *establishing in-country institutional structures*, such as Task Forces and Steering Committees to represent the range of stakeholder perspectives while following either discreet components or the Poverty Assessment as a whole in the process of preparation.

**Formulation of Policy Prescriptions**

The description and analysis of poverty conditions must be followed by policy prescriptions which take into account the specific socio-economic and political environment of the country. Policy recommendations which are seen as too theoretical, abstract or insensitive to local circumstances will obviously have a much smaller impact than those which reflect the perceptions of major institutional stakeholders and, implicitly, the poor themselves.

While some governments have actually welcomed a set of independently derived policy prescriptions by Bank staff, most task managers have faced the quandary of how best to reconcile the policy interests of senior government officials and other vocal stakeholders with the results obtained by the poverty research and analysis. One example common in many African countries has been the debate over whether or not civil servants who have seen decreases in their real incomes should be categorized as "poor". A similar kind of debate has been seen in public expenditure analysis which has shown the disproportionately high amount of resources going into tertiary education, including student stipends or scholarships independent of need or merit. Discussion of agrarian reform or poverty among indigenous peoples in Latin America and Asia can elicit similar kinds of difficulties for policy debate and discussion.

Perhaps the most participatory PAs in terms of policy formulation in tandem with the government have been those done for Peru and Morocco. In both cases, the task manager separated the Poverty Assessment from the policy document and in turn placed the responsibility for preparing the policy document on the shoulders of the government. The PA was presented as a supporting piece of research and analysis to help the government in its policy formulation process. Various drafts of the policy papers were discussed with the task managers and other Bank staff before the final publication.

Participation of institutional stakeholders outside the government in the formulation of policy prescription is an area where there is as yet little experience to draw on (aside from the obvious cases where independent researchers have been contracted to actually work on the assessment). In Zambia, an informal workshop was held in the country with a wide range of governmental and nongovernmental participants selected on the basis of their individual expertise to discuss a preliminary draft of the Poverty Assessment which did not yet contain policy recommendations. The workshop was

**Box 14**

**Poland’s Poverty Assessment: Expanded Client Consultation**

Poland’s process of democratization and transition to a market economy has resulted in a high level of interest in poverty and social safety net issues. In the process of preparing the PA, the Bank team both involved government officials and local researchers in the various phases of analysis and encouraged ongoing contacts with major university institutes and trade unions in order to share the emerging results. The research teams also met with safety-net service providers throughout the country to solicit their views on issues related to effectiveness of the government’s range of pensions, family allowances and other forms of unemployment and social assistance.
able to canvas a broad range of views prior to developing the policy conclusions of the PA.

**Dissemination of Results**

The most common participatory approach used to disseminate the results of the poverty assessment has been for the government and Bank to convene a seminar or workshop to discuss the findings, conclusions and policy recommendations of the PA. But no matter how participatory it may be, is holding another workshop enough to actually affect change and help implement needed reforms and expenditure shifts? Once the workshop is over, the task manager is confronted with the challenge of avoiding having the PA become just another poverty report gathering the proverbial dust on the bookshelf.

The earlier cited examples of Morocco and Peru represent a promising approach, because they linked each government’s poverty strategy document with the agenda of the respective Consultative Group meeting and the Bank’s lending program. In the case of Morocco, the Morocco country team went one step further by linking the size of the Bank’s lending program for three social priority projects to improvements in the country’s social indicators (which are low in comparison to other Maghreb countries, such as Tunisia and Algeria). In the case of Peru, the poverty strategy document was discussed at a Consultative Group meeting in June 1993 and served as the basis on which much of Peru’s donor support for poverty and the social sectors was generated. To be sure, both countries represent examples where the participatory involvement entailed a strong "carrot and stick" approach to Bank-government dialogue, as future support was contingent on the government taking a high level of initiative in developing poverty reduction programs and policies. Such an approach assumes a high degree of capacity and commitment in the borrower government and may not be feasible in all cases.

An important point about the Morocco and Peru examples is that they illustrate meaningful internal dissemination within the Bank itself, into the operational strategy and lending program of the country department as a whole. The Morocco Poverty Assessment was undertaken, based on the solid foundation of earlier Living Standards Measurement Surveys, statistical support and policy conditionalities that placed the burden on government to complete an updated poverty profile and monitor progress in social sector spending. In this sense, the Poverty Assessment was not an isolated piece of analytical work, unrelated to prior country dialogue and subsequent components of the country’s lending program.

A separate set of issues that have so far received less attention concerns dissemination of the results of the Poverty Assessment outside of the World Bank, the donor community and the government concerned, and into elements of civil society including NGOs, community based organizations, and the media. On this issue, there is not as yet a great deal of experience. A fundamental point is that effective dissemination of, and commitment to, a strategy for poverty reduction outlined in a PA will be to a large measure dependent on the level and breadth of stakeholder involvement in the various phases of preparation identified above. In the Zambia case, a wide involvement of institutional stakeholders has meant that support for the poverty reduction Action Plan, which is the centerpiece of the PA, extends well beyond government agencies to other donors and NGOs active in the country.
4. Conclusions

This brief review of participation in Poverty Assessments has highlighted a number of areas where task managers have gone about increasing the level of contact and interaction with primary and institutional stakeholders. Even though Poverty Assessments are a Bank requirement and may have to be undertaken regardless of a government’s interest or commitment, task managers have proven themselves adept in a wide variety of situations at generating interest, involving local researchers, and, in some cases, making poverty reduction a condition for Bank and other donor support. Clearly, given the range of countries where the Bank works, there is no single methodology of participation that is applicable across the board. Similar strategies or approaches may result in widely different outcomes, especially with regard to government participation and follow through.

This caveat notwithstanding, some of the early lessons learned in making PAs more participatory under these widely varying circumstances would include:

- Increasing participatory interaction with stakeholders is time consuming, but if pursued seriously leads to worthwhile benefits in terms of enhanced local ownership and impact of poverty reduction strategy.

- Participation can occur at many different points in the cycle of preparing a PA, but how much each kind of stakeholder can be involved at each stage in the cycle varies, as do the mechanisms for promoting participation. These include, but are not limited to, workshops, review committees, government contact points, collaborative research arrangements, and coordination or advocacy mechanisms, as well as participatory interviewing of the poor.

- Increasing participatory interaction will usually involve a task manager losing some "control" over the contents and output of the PA, but with benefits in terms of an increased level of ownership of the final products in government and civil society. Influencing and sensitizing policymakers in the process of systematically addressing poverty issues is more important than the actual contents of the PA itself.

- Most institutional stakeholder involvement has concentrated on government officials and local researchers. There is, to date, very little experience within the Bank of systematically involving nongovernment actors, such as opinion leaders, journalists, civic or religious leaders, public interest groups, and indigenous development NGOs in the various stages of preparing a PA. Innovative approaches in this area could make a major contribution to the development of poverty assessment methodologies.

- The use of PPAs in the preparation of PAs and other poverty related work is a new and very promising approach to complementing or testing more traditional forms of economic and social data. The methodologies of PPAs are still evolving, but it is already clear that the results can have important policy relevance and impact.

- Participation in the preparation of poverty assessments is best seen as an ongoing process of analysis and collaboration with...
By any measure, a national strategy for poverty reduction must reflect as far as possible a consensus based on extensive dialogue between a wide range of primary and institutional stakeholders within the country itself concerning the nature of poverty and the type of actions which will most effectively improve the situation. This recognizes that the concept of poverty embodies general cultural values about entitlement and need which are a significant element of a country’s national culture. Outsiders can engage in this process, but ultimately the momentum must reside within the society itself.
References

World Bank Participatory Poverty Assessments:

Background


General Material:
Participatory Research into Poverty


Introductory Material:
Participatory/Rapid Rural Appraisal


Introductory Material:
Beneficiary Assessment
