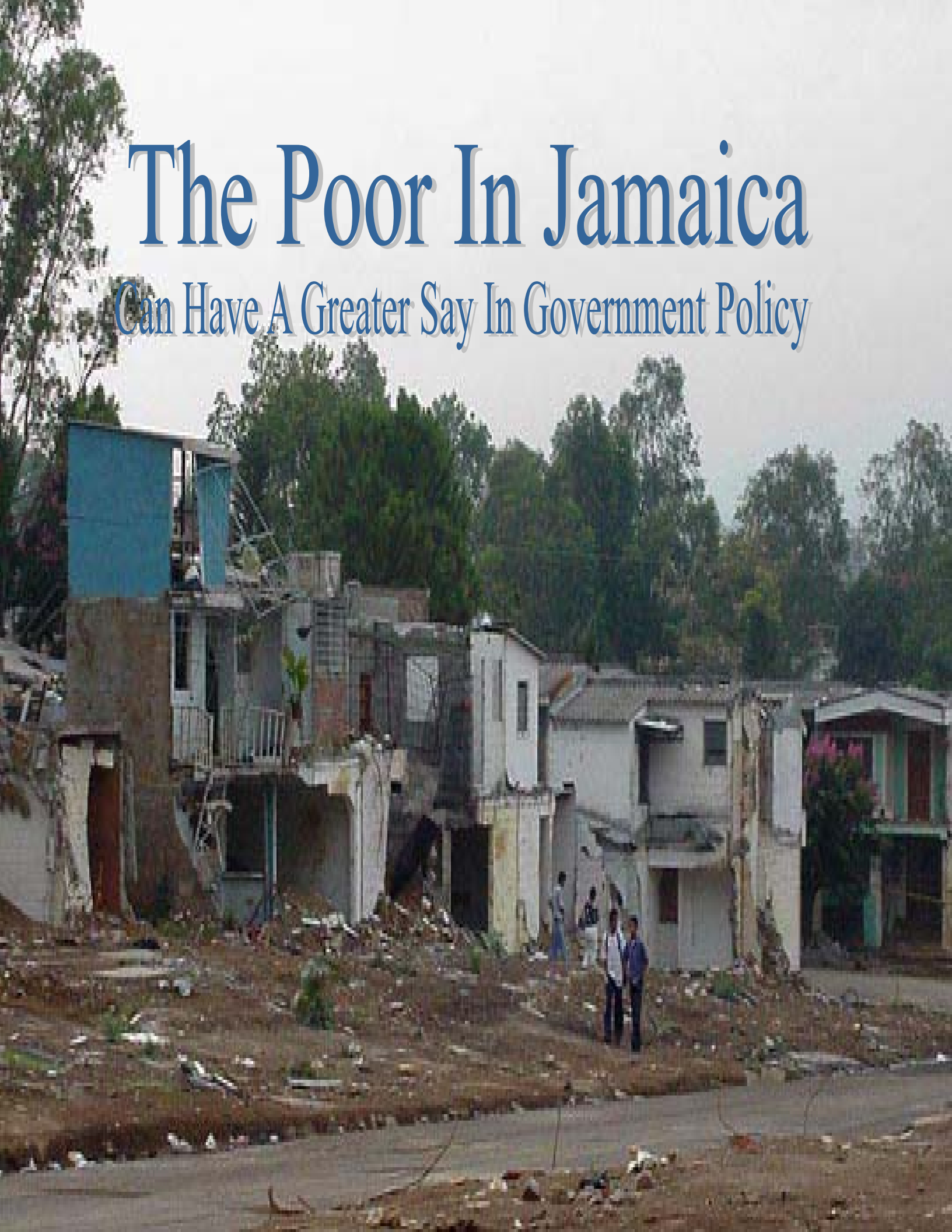


The Poor In Jamaica

Can Have A Greater Say In Government Policy



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The Poor In Jamaica Can Have a Greater Say in Government Policy: A Comparative Analysis

Peter W. Jones

VOLUME I

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

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The Economic Development Institute

"The essence of the knowledge is, having it, to apply it; not having it, to confess your ignorance. Ignorance is the night of the mind, but a night without moon or star".

Confucius.

"It is not the degree that makes a great man; it is the man that makes the degree great"

Nicoli Machiavelli.

The Economic Development Institute under the theme **Global Thinking Research** was established in 2001. We are group of past students of the University of the West Indies living in and outside Jamaica. We came to the realization from when we were on the Mona Campus that in the **Information Age** we live in, successful people are those who have access to information. We formed a group to share in this **New Way of Thinking** and found it fruitful to our endeavours . Unfortunately, we had to restrict our information bases in many cases as our lecturers and tutors deemed it fit to remain in a vacuum of limitation with regards to the evolution of the **New Information Paradigm**. We were clearly ahead of our time. We have developed this new product called the **Information Booklet Series (which there is a need for)**, the product provides **information on topical issues** in the areas of Management, Sports, Information Technology, Public Administration, Information and Communication, Economics, Economic Development, Social Development, Legal Education, Industrial Relations at competitive prices. We have kept it simple so that all can understand and appreciate. As such, we do not regard them as theses on the chosen areas and they do not seek academic recognition, however they do meet WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization) Standards. We hope you will find the following informative and instructive and as usual your comments would be appreciated.

Peter W. Jones
Executive Director

Introduction

Development thinking has changed significantly in recent years. Policymakers have recognized the ability of the poor to make a valuable contribution to the analysis of poverty and are consulting them directly. This new participatory approach has resulted in a broader definition of poverty and better-informed public policies that are more responsive to the needs of the poor.

By the end of the 1990s, there was growing recognition by governments and civil society of the need to change the way national strategies to reduce poverty were developed and implemented. Previous strategies had met with little success in Latin America and Africa, and poverty was on the rebound in East Asia after the financial crisis of 1997-98. It had become clear that, to succeed, poverty reduction programs needed to be developed by the countries themselves—rather than imposed from the outside—and that the input of the poor was critical to the development of effective poverty reduction strategies.

In September 1999, the World Bank and the IMF agreed to major changes in their operations to help low-income countries achieve sustainable poverty reduction. Henceforth, programs supported by the two institutions will be based on government-driven poverty reduction strategies (PRSs) developed in consultation with civil society and summarized in poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs).

In formulating poverty reduction strategies, policymakers have begun consulting the poor directly through participatory poverty assessments (PPAs), a methodology developed during the 1990s by governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions, and donors. Although many methods have long existed for consulting the poor on the development of projects, PPAs are different in that their findings are intended to be used in national policymaking. To date, more than 50 countries have undertaken PPAs with assistance from the World Bank; an equal number of PPAs have been conducted by other agencies, including the United Nations Development Program, bilaterals, and NGOs.

What is a PPA?

A PPA is a tool that allows us to consult the poor directly; findings are transmitted to policymakers, thereby enabling the poor to influence policy. Unlike a household survey, which consists of a predetermined set of questions, a PPA uses a variety of flexible methods that combine visual techniques (mapping, matrices, diagrams) and verbal techniques (open-ended interviews, discussion groups) and emphasizes exercises that facilitate information sharing, analysis, and action. The goal is to give the intended beneficiaries more control over the research process. PPAs are usually carried out by intermediaries such as NGOs, academic institutions, government extension workers, and local consulting firms. The approach "stresses changes in the behavior and attitudes of outsiders to become not teachers but facilitators, not lecturers but listeners and learners" (Chambers, 1997). To ensure follow-up at the community level (a principle of participatory research), many PPAs (for example, those in The Gambia, Tanzania, and Uganda) have involved the development of community action plans subsequently supported by local governments or NGOs. Using PPAs to extract information just for research purposes, with limited participation and no link to policymaking, is considered bad practice.

Policy analysis in the past was focused on a classic statistical approach to poverty based on indicators of income, health, and education; poverty itself was measured by a money-metric poverty line derived from traditional household surveys. It has been recognized that an approach dominated by economic analysis fails to capture the many dimensions of poverty, while a multidisciplinary approach can deepen our understanding of the lives of the poor. PPAs, with their focus on well-being and quality of life, have consistently shown that such problems as vulnerability, physical and social isolation, insecurity, lack of self-respect, lack of access to information, distrust of state institutions, and powerlessness can be as important to the poor as low income.

Moreover, because PPAs go beyond the household unit of traditional surveys to focus on individuals, intrahousehold dynamics, social groups (based on variables such as gender, ethnicity, class, caste, age), and community relationships, they capture the diversity of poverty. They have shown that people's priorities and experiences are affected by such variables as gender, social exclusion, intrahousehold allocation of resources, the incidence of crime and violence, geographical location, access to networks of support, and relations with those in power.

Advantages of PPA's

PPAs have three key elements. First, they increase our understanding of the multidimensional nature of poverty and enable us to include the perspective and priorities of poor people in our analysis of poverty and formulation of policies. Second, they promote wider ownership of researchers' findings and increase the influence of these findings on policymaking by including a cross section of other groups (for example, NGOs, policymakers, administrators, civic groups) in the process. Third, they can help countries increase their capacity to analyze and monitor poverty, as has happened, for example, in Mongolia, Vietnam, and Zambia.

PPA's highlight many aspects of poverty

Vulnerability

Vulnerable groups are not always identified in household surveys, nor is the fact that their access to productive resources might be constrained by political, cultural, and social factors. In Armenia, single pensioners were consistently ranked by the communities as the poorest not because they had the least income but because they were isolated and socially excluded. In many countries, poor people's access to the labor market is restricted, forcing them into low-paid, insecure, often dangerous occupations, many of which are illegal, simply because no other options for earning a livelihood are open to them. In many African countries, the HIV/AIDS crisis is putting pressure on already strained networks of support; in Zambia, it has led to an increase in the number of particularly vulnerable households headed by children.

Gender differences

In Tanzania, men identified lack of transportation, farming conditions, and drunkenness as the three most important problems, whereas women identified food shortages, lack of clean water, and illness. In many PPAs, women complained of a lack of time to engage in activities other than working in the fields or the home.

Crime and violence

Some PPAs have highlighted the relationship between poverty and illegal activities, such as child prostitution (Zambia), drugs (Jamaica), and domestic violence (Mexico and Vietnam). Household surveys often are not able to obtain information on such sensitive topics because of respondents' mistrust of interviewers. Ecuador's PPA revealed that street crime and violence deter women from working outside the home, and safety concerns discourage women and the elderly from using public transport, particularly at night.

Seasonality

Many PPAs, including those in Ghana, South Africa, Togo, and Zambia, have revealed great

seasonal differences in poverty (for example, food security, access to water, and health). When people are forced to sell their assets, seasonal poverty can turn into long-term poverty.

Powerlessness

In The Gambia and Uganda, the poor expressed frustration about their lack of influence on government policies. Ugandans also expressed concern about government corruption and distrust of state institutions, especially the police and the judiciary. In Vietnam's PPA, people said they lacked information on their entitlements, rights, and the activities of local government.

Characteristics of PPA's

PPAs often take less time and cost less than household surveys because they use a selected sample of communities . As a result, they are not as extensive, representative, or standardized. They nonetheless provide more in-depth analysis of the views of the poor and the political, social, and institutional context, as well as insights into the reasons people become—or cease being—poor and their survival strategies.

The design of a PPA is determined by conditions in a given country, research agenda, size of sample, and experience of researchers. A typical PPA has the following features:

Cost	\$US75,000-\$US200,000
Number of communities selected for research	40-60
Time spent on training	2 weeks
Time spent on field research	3-6 months
Time spent on analysis	2-3 months

Size of research team	10-20 people
Composition of research team	Nationals of country, with men and women equally represented; ability to speak local languages; representatives from various ethnic and age groups
Typical agency conducting the field work	Government extension workers; local and international NGOs; academic institutions; independent consultants and firms
Examples of donors that have contributed	U.K. Department for International Development (DFID), World Bank, to government-led PPAs Action Aid, Oxfam, UNDP, UNICEF, Danish Agency for Development Assistance (DANIDA), Asian Development Bank

Traditional household surveys vs. Participatory research methods

Because methodological questions arise with both traditional household surveys and participatory research methods, it is essential to use them in combination: the findings of each can help researchers examine, explain, confirm, refute, or enrich information from the other (Carvalho and White, 1997). Which survey comes first should be determined by the conditions in each country. If the PPA comes first, its results can focus the research agenda for household surveys and generate hypotheses. Conversely, the results of household surveys can help identify the poorest geographical areas where research should be conducted and develop questions for future PPAs. The ideal process is an iterative one.

Impact on government policy

Participatory policymaking is based on incorporating information gathered from local communities in a broader policy dialogue that includes a cross section of civic groups. But policymaking is a complex—and inherently political—process. Rules, legislation, traditions, networks, ethnic alliances, patronage, political allegiances, and bureaucratic structures all interact to form a complex and fluctuating policy environment. PPAs have had little or no impact in countries where political support for poverty reduction measures is lacking, participation of groups other than the poor is limited, or the government, donors, and participants mistrust each other.

Experience shows that governments should lead the process and key policymakers and administrators should be involved in planning the PPA from the earliest stages, that policymakers and donors should go to the field to participate in the PPA, and that high-level support is required to follow up on the findings and monitor the implementation of key recommendations. In Cameroon, for example, the government disregarded a PPA, even though the field work was of good quality and the results relevant, in part because some key policymakers felt excluded from the process.

In general, open political environments provide greater opportunities for building consensus around policies for poverty reduction. In Costa Rica, where there is a tradition of bringing marginal groups into the political sphere, the government was eager to better understand poverty from the perspective of the poor, and the data from the PPA therefore had an impact on policy. If a government is not fully committed to consulting the poor, it is unlikely to act on research results that run counter to its own interest. In such circumstances, participation should initially be limited to a few groups.

The Impact of PPA's on poverty reduction strategies

The process and findings of participatory research are relevant to poverty reduction strategies at four stages

Poverty analysis

The PRSPs can incorporate information from the PPAs on the multidimensional aspects and causes of poverty.

Formulation and dissemination

The priorities of the poor should be reflected in the goals set forth in the PRSPs. This can include the sequencing of public actions, the choice of indicators for monitoring implementation of poverty reduction strategies, and budget allocations.

Monitoring

The PPAs can provide policymakers with information on the effectiveness and relevance of poverty reduction strategies and the institutions that implement them, as well as on the delivery of the budget and quality of services.

Evaluation of outcomes

Outcomes reported during PPAs should be integrated with data on outcomes gathered from other sources and used to inform decisions on whether to change policies and budget allocations.

Benefits of PPA's to Government Policy

In many countries, the poor are excluded from the policymaking process and often marginalized. Enabling poor communities to participate in the formulation of policy can empower them; they cease to be merely the passive recipients of (sometimes misguided) state benevolence and donor assistance. The two-way information flow—presenting data gathered during PPAs to policymakers and making information about government policies and budgets available to the public—can strengthen policymaking. Participation by civic groups and the poor in monitoring and evaluation promotes transparency and accountability and enhances people's awareness of their rights—and, in the long run, may encourage them to demand better governance. Furthermore, experience indicates that where there is a broad policy dialogue on poverty that includes different civil society groups, the constituency for reform is widened, the country's sense of ownership of policies is stronger, and policies are more likely to be implemented.

The outcome of many PPAs has been an increase in face-to-face interactions between diverse groups—such as NGOs, local community groups, and local and central governments—and better understanding between civil society and the state (McGee and Norton, 2000). PPAs have also shown that the poor have the capacity to appraise, analyze, plan, and act to a far greater extent than had heretofore been acknowledged by many development experts. Including the poor through a PPA leads to better technical diagnosis of problems and better design and implementation of solutions. When undertaken in an environment of increased trust, PPAs can present opportunities for a more open dialogue and greater understanding between those in power and the poor.

The Challenge for Participatory Poverty Assessments

The moral imperative for giving the poor a voice in the poverty debate is self evident. The bonus is that engaging with the poor also leads to better technical diagnosis of the problem, and better design and implementation of the solution. Through PPAs, the poor deepen our understanding of poverty and can influence policymaking. This new approach challenges traditional power relations and calls for a variety of partnerships that require trust, openness, and integrity.

Both poverty and policy change are inherently linked to the political process in any country. But when undertaken in an environment of increased trust, PPAs can present opportunities for a more open dialogue and greater understanding between the powerless and those in power. Such dialogue is the beginning of wisdom-and the beginning of a journey that can lead from hopelessness to opportunity.

Jamaica's policy towards poverty eradication

Introduction

The government of Jamaica(GOJ) policy is outlined in Ministry Paper no. 13/97 as follows:

In 1994, the Government of Jamaica stated its commitment to eradicate poverty. Since then, it has consulted with the local private sector, academia, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), international agencies, church, political opposition, community-based organizations (CBOs) and other communities groups. These consultations have culminated in the development of "Jamaica's Policy Towards Poverty Eradication" (the Policy) and the " National Poverty Eradication Programme: A Community-Based Partnership Approach" (NPEP), both of which are being tabled.

Both the Policy and the Programme are predicated on the commitment to promote economic and social development; to reduce the number of persons below the poverty line in targeted poor communities by 50 percent over three years; and to eradicate absolute poverty (as measured by selected criteria which assess the individual's inability to meet basic human needs). This Ministry Paper gives a summary of the Policy and the NPEP for the information of the Honourable House of Parliament.

The Policy and Programme

The community is the central focus of the efforts towards poverty eradication. The Policy seeks to marshal all the available resources and re-orient them to the vision of eradicating poverty primarily through integrated community development. Existing programmes will be modified and new programmes targeted at eradicating poverty through community activity.

The Policy has as its priorities:

Geographic Targeting/Integrated Community Development: the most deprived communities island wide are to be identified, and emphasis is on eliminating physical, social, and economic poverty conditions in those communities;

Unemployed Youth, and Families with Children in low income groups: within, and outside of the identified deprived poor communities, these population groups will be singled out to benefit from specific social services support;

Safety Nets/Income Transfers: the purpose will shift from welfare to developmental, from cushioning the negative impact of the economic environment to one of eliminating dependency and promoting self-reliance; although there will always be some aged and needy who will continue to need and receive "welfare."

Building the "enabling environment": members of communities will be empowered to take responsibility for identifying the physical, social and economic needs to be met so as to eradicate poverty in their communities; they will be given the opportunity to acquire the skills and resources to themselves provide the means of eradication, and they will be given support to develop legal and other community institutions with which to sustain their rise from poverty. The implementing capacities of public sector and non-public agencies will be assessed, rationalized, and strengthened to improve their ability to deliver under the poverty eradication programme.

The NPEP has as its guiding principles and strategies: Integration, Partnership, Community-based participation and Sustainability

The three aims are:

Integration:! a close-knit relationship between agencies involved in poverty eradication activities so as to eliminate duplication and optimize resource use; ! judiciously combining existing and new projects to amplify the impact of projects nationally; and using a holistic and multifaceted strategy to

amplify the impact of projects on communities.

ii. Partnership: Besides the Government, programme implementation will involve the private sector, Non-Governmental Organizations, community residents and organizations, and donor/lender agencies.

Community-based participation: Communities will be empowered to participate in policy and programme decisions, to take the lead, as far as possible, in identifying their needs, designing appropriate projects, deciding on indicators for success of the projects, accessing and generating finance and providing the skills to implement the projects.

Sustainability: Sustainability is to be assured through: promoting environmental protection; conservation in the use of natural resources; a reinvestment model for capital accumulated; social/cultural acceptability of strategies; "ownership" of the community by residents; and commitment to the programme by the private sector and donor/lender community.

Approaches to implementation

Implementation of the NPEP started in the 1995/1996 financial year. Initially, some sixty-nine programmes (68 existing and 1 new) in ten Ministries and supporting agencies were identified for their potential to contribute to the eradication of poverty; since then, three projects were added.

Implementation is scheduled to end in 1999/2000.

The activities of the NPEP have been grouped into four sub-programmes: "Community Based Programmes", "Human Resources/Social Development and Welfare", "Environment and Natural Resources Protection", and "The Enabling Environment (Institutional Capacity Building and Economic/Employment/Infrastructure)."

Community Based Programmes

Highlighted is the need for community empowerment, economic development and a coherent set of programmes:

programme (the Government, non-Government, Community Based) will be given the skills to promote participatory processes and communication flows to build an informed community which can be responsible for its actions

- economic development: a bank of projects is being identified within communities, by communities, to promote the use of indigenous materials; community members will be able to receive technical assistance to guide them in developing income-building mechanisms in communities based on

accumulation and use of Community Re-Investment Funds; the Funds will be used to start up community (eco-)development projects, and a portion of the profits re-invested into other projects within the community.

- a coherent set of projects: the roles of Government community-based programmes will be rationalized and inter-agency co-ordination will be strengthened.

Human resources and social development/welfare

Health, education, and welfare programmes will be targeted, firstly, at the poor in the geographic areas and to youth and families with children, and then to the other vulnerable groups such as the elderly and persons with disabilities in the identified population groups;

Health: special financing arrangements; expansion of drug windows, improved pharmaceutical stocks in the public sector, and the promotion of generic drugs; greater focus on community health care and family programmes for sanitation and hygiene; food security and nutrition; drug abuse prevention; and reproductive health education (including family planning; of health care) for the poor will be introduced;

Education: involves curricula reform to include good life skills; a common core curriculum at first cycle secondary level; expansion of space at second cycle secondary and rationalization of entry procedures; expansion of continuing and adult education programmes; targeting of the most needy under the text book scheme;

Social Development and Welfare: targeting youth and families with children in the lower income levels, to prevent and correct socio-economic dislocation from broken families, and sensitize and educate parents and the general public about "why" and "how" they should attend to children's well-being; the welfare system will: be rationalized and made more cost efficient; fine-tune its targeting of the poor (to include the new poor and the chronically poor) the elderly, and persons with disabilities; be adjusted to promote economic independence; the school feeding programme will improve its targeting, while scaling down the nutri-bun and milk component in preference to the traditional component with the potential to establish strong community links.

Environment and natural resources protection

This programme focusses on ensuring the sustainability of our natural resources, through emphasis on good practices in hillside agriculture, soil and water conservation, watershed management; legislation in keeping with current trends in environmental protection will facilitate enforcement.

The enabling environment

This sub-programme deals with the question of having a supportive context within which to directly tackle poverty. Focus is on building the communities' capacities to be responsive to and responsible for the institutional and economic requirements, while Government provides the socio-economic policy framework to encourage participation from non-Government, community, religious, and other members of civil society, locally and globally. Industrial, fiscal, and monetary policies will be sensitive to the needs of the poverty policy and strategies; labour market reform will strive to promote greater equity in allocation and valuation of employment. institutions, procedures, and skills to sustain the integrative, participatory, community development for poverty eradication will be established at community, parish, and national levels.

Institutional framework

The NPEP will have a three-tiered management structure spanning the national, parish and community levels. It is designed to be non-partisan and resilient to political change. The concept of partnership is the undergirding of the management structure at all three levels. The Programme Monitoring and Co-ordination Unit under the direction of the Minister of Special Programmes, Office of the Prime Minister has the overall responsibility for ensuring the effective management, cohesion and integration of the various elements of the NPEP. At the community level, the Social Development Commission will work with communities to establish local institutions/groups and build local capacity to develop and implement projects beneficial to them. It is anticipated that when the Local Government Reform is being implemented the community empowerment process would be so advanced that the two operations will be merged to avoid duplication.

Financing the NPEP

The estimated cost of financing the NPEP over the period 1995/96 to 1999/2000 is J\$15,429 million (the equivalent of approximately US\$441.00 million). The estimates will be reviewed annually, and adjusted to provide for improved cost effectiveness of the programme. The Government, non-

Government organizations, the private sector, the international financing agencies, and individuals in communities are expected to contribute to the programme's financing.

Conclusion

The Policy and Programme to eradicate poverty were developed out of the acknowledgement that it is time for the country to make a concerted move to improve the conditions of the socially and economically vulnerable within the society. The action plan for poverty eradication was developed through a process of consultation among representatives of Government, community, non-Government, private sector, and Government organizations, and members of the donor and lending agencies. The implementation progress and success of the NPEP will be dependent on the continued co-operation among all the partners. It requires a willingness to work together for the national good and depends, to a large extent, on the ability of leaders of all persuasions to assist in the mobilization of communities and to sustain them in their efforts to move to a higher state of "well-being".

The Cabinet approved Jamaica's Policy Towards Poverty Eradication and the National Poverty Eradication Programme in October 1995, subject to the revision of the proposed institutional framework. The revision was carried out and agreed on by a wide cross-section of agencies. The framework is designed to facilitate the cohesive and co-ordinated implementation and monitoring of the NPEP.

To examine Jamaica in a vacuum would not give this paper the balance that is required as such we looked at other examples or case studies so that there can be an effective comparative analysis.

Case Study 1: Jamaica

This study focused on participatory poverty assessments of four urban and five rural sites, which represent a diversity of social issues. Each of the eight finalised Site Reports examines four main themes: Well-being, Problems and Priorities of the Poor, Institutional Analysis, and Gender Relations.

The methodology deployed enables people with low literacy skills to represent and analyse their perceptions and experiences of poverty and relies on the range of participatory appraisal techniques, including matrix exercises, cause-impact diagrams, Venn diagrams, time charts and transects.

The research was conducted so as to examine the differences and similarities in perceptions of at least four groups; adult men, adult women, older men and older women. Interviews were also conducted with male and female youth, children and special interest groups (such as fishermen or the independent Maroons) whenever possible. Comparison is made between rural and urban sites, and conditions over the last ten and twenty-five years.

Well-being Definitions of households' well-being tended to be based on social categorisation related to income, personal and psychological welfare, and the means of producing assets.

Older people generally defined a smaller number of well-being categories and a greater disparity in the proportions of households in each category than other groups. Urban focus groups identified a greater diversity of criteria through which to define well-being categories than those in rural locations, and place more emphasis on luxury domestic items as criteria whereas rural groups focus on productive assets such as land and transportation. Extremes of rich and poor categories are less evident in rural locations.

Women in both urban and rural locations equated well-being with good nutrition, regular schooling and personal independence. Younger groups of both genders stressed skills training and older groups reflected concerns over the level of health care provision. While younger men focused on sports, older men perceived freedom from political violence as important. Women described household assets more readily than men and tended to base well-being categories on clothes, child welfare, hygiene, savings and those people who are dependent on them. Men

concentrated on informal trading opportunities, clothes and food.

Across all groups, unemployment was seen as the main cause of poverty. Urban groups also emphasise the lack of skills training, discrimination, and low wages, while rural groups focus on the lack of access to markets, poor road conditions, and uncompetitive prices for agricultural inputs and produce. Teenage pregnancy and migration were identified across most sites. The impacts of poverty are more varied in urban locations and include overcrowding, lack of ability to educate children, poor sanitation, ill health, dependency, unstable personal relationships, crime, and psychological problems such as depression, low self-esteem and apathy. Both teenage pregnancy and lack of education were commonly cited as both causes and impacts of poverty and therefore seem to be major factors in the promotion of a downward poverty spiral. Security was defined in urban areas as being free from crime and violence and possessing secure land tenure, while rural sites tended to perceive this concept in terms of economic stability. Opportunities for increasing personal well-being are perceived by all groups to have decreased over the last twenty years. Urban sites relate this to the closure and downsizing of industries and are not generally optimistic about economically viable strategies in the informal sector. In rural sites the exploitation of the natural resource base in non-traditional ways provides the main economic opportunities. All sites directly related decreasing well-being with the necessity to undertake illicit employment, principally through prostitution, selling drugs and cultivating marijuana.

In urban areas those groups excluded from community activities include the old, HIV sufferers, political opponents, homosexuals, thieves, those who practice oral sex, and those who lack motivation. In rural sites, there was less diversity in those identified as excluded and groups include returning residents who have worked abroad, in-migrants, rum drinkers and drug takers. The main factor affecting whether people are included or excluded is in terms of the ability to access goods and services and personal patronage is seen as important in urban areas, especially to men. Social cohesion is widely defined in relation to unity and is perceived to have increased recently compared to the politically divisive period during the 1980s. In rural areas social networks are more inclusive than in urban areas, although the most widespread and economically important informal network, particularly for women, is the savings and banking system known as *pardner*. Local ad hoc justice is widely seen as a more effective deterrent to crime than involving the Police.

Most focus groups identified significant decreases in the well-being of the poorest categories over the last ten years. Some rural groups identify an emerging category of severely poor

households, often including the elderly.

Problems and Priorities of the Poor

Unemployment is consistently ranked as the priority concern, particularly by women and young men in rural areas and by men in urban areas. Next most important in urban sites are the issues of housing and education. Rural communities tend to perceive problems associated with accessibility (often related to road conditions) as the first or second priority and this is closely followed by problems connected to a lack of education and skills training.

It seems that women in urban areas commonly experience a lower order of difficulty over gaining formal and informal employment. In both Kingston sites housing is ranked as the highest priority. This relates both to the condition of housing and to relations between landowners and tenants.

The problem of inaccessibility is commonly perceived as double-sided in that this issue affects the economic well-being of the community by constraining the marketability of agricultural produce while simultaneously affecting the capacity for infrastructural development to enter rural areas.

A greater number of distinct problems were identified in rural areas. Although the lack of skills was ranked as a high priority across all sites (particularly by men and adult females), the dearth of training seems to be most acute for adults in rural areas. In all sites there was a widespread perception that young women were the most skilled and educationally successful.

The rural sites of Duckenfield and Freeman's Hall exhibit several characteristics more usually associated with urban sites.

The problem of unemployment has remained highly important over the last ten years and, in some cases, has increased significantly for male and rural groups. The issue of inaccessibility has increased in priority for rural areas. Access to education may have decreased in importance marginally and skills training programmes have become more accessible in physical, but not economic, terms.

Many of the younger groups perceived limited opportunities for the future and saw international migration as the major criterion for economic success.

The problems that are widely perceived as solvable by community members alone are largely related to the psychological aspects of poverty. Those which are seen as exclusively dependent on external assistance are the provision of public services (such as telephones, water supply and

street lighting), employment and health care. A combination of community input and outside initiatives is viewed as important in reducing the negative impacts associated with road conditions, housing and land tenure, teenage pregnancy, sanitation and the lack of skills training and education.

Institutional Representation

Schools, churches, Citizens' Associations and Youth Clubs are seen as important and positive influences, particularly by female groups. Food for the Poor, The Red Cross and The Salvation Army are seen, alongside some environmental NGOs, as effective. The Police, public service providers and political representatives are perceived negatively. Local businesses are identified as vital sources of credit during economic crisis and the family is providing important assistance, particularly by rural groups and in relation to remittances from abroad.

Individuals within an institution were widely seen as more trustworthy and effective than the institution itself, and outstanding individuals' performance could even negate some of the detrimental perceptions of particular institutions. Similarly some formal institutions that provide informal services (such as shelter from hurricanes in schools) were ranked highly.

The effectiveness of an institution is ranked as a more important criterion by women than by men and trust is seen as most important among older groups.

People feel that they have influence over informal, internal institutions and would generally like to have more influence over the Police, Member of Parliament, Councillor, the Rural Agricultural Development Authority, Social Development Commission, Jamaica Public Service Company, Cable and Wireless, the National Housing Trust, and the National Water Commission. Particularly in rural locations, natural disasters are the main causes of crises. These are associated with hurricanes, floods, fire and landslides. Few groups ranked highly the operations of public sector agencies, no international agencies were identified, and the only NGO to be consistently identified was Food for the Poor. The government's Poor Relief and Food Stamps programmes were perceived as highly valuable in increasing income security for the poorest people, although the amount received (around US\$ 4 per month) often represents less than the fare to collect it. Another government programme identified as valuable was the NWC's Rapid Response Unit for addressing water supply problems. Many of the church organisations are perceived as providing valuable assistance during crises, however most were considered to help only members of their own congregation.

Improvements to existing programmes suggested in rural areas include a long term strategy for NWC to install water supply infrastructure, more money to be distributed under the Food Stamps and Poor Relief programmes, a return to the government's road maintenance programme under which local residents are employed, JPSCo to install more streetlights, strengthening of RADA's outreach capacity, and that SDC should do more to promote broad community development. In urban areas common suggestions included that external agencies should register for assistance those who qualify through need rather than distributing through bodies such as the Citizens' Association (such as Food for the Poor) and that more and more various skills training should be provided.

Gender Relations

Ten years ago women's household responsibilities were primarily centred around ensuring the welfare of their children, undertaking domestic chores, and providing a comfortable environment for their male partners. However, with significant increases in their income earning abilities, women are now often the chief breadwinners for the family. Particularly in urban sites, men are increasingly participating in, or taking lead responsibility for, domestic activities.

At the community level, women are now more likely to take executive positions in organisations such as the church committee or Citizens' Association, although men are still the titular heads in most cases.

Women see power as the ability to earn money and remain independent from men. Rich and adult women are perceived as having the best opportunities for social advancement, although the dependence of young women on men was identified. The inability of men to find employment has resulted in diminished status in the household and community. Women seem to be prepared to work harder and for lower wages than men.

There is a general consensus that domestic violence is decreasing and seems to be discussed as more largely an urban phenomenon. This decrease is directly related to women's increased economic power and consciousness raising in the media. Young women commonly express unwillingness to remain in partnerships with economically unproductive men.

Changes in domestic power relations mean that women have greater sexual independence than previously. Older, independent women appear to be more likely now to enter into relationships with younger men.

Men largely seem willing to accept the new compromises being forged between the genders.

Case Study 2: Costa Rica

Background

Costa Rica has a per capita income of US\$2,590 (1995) annually and thus is at the higher end of the lower-income countries. Its quality-of life indicators are similar to those of a developed country. However, the key indicators of social well-being are more similar to those of a middle income country. Costa Rica has traditionally had an efficient public social sector and a strong pro-poor political party, and government is actively seeking ways to alleviate poverty and open up the policy dialogue.

A program called the National Plan to Combat Poverty, administered under the Second Vice President, has identified the 17 poorest communities in Costa Rica. Under the plan, pilot studies to analyze poverty have been initiated.

Process

POLICY DIALOGUE IN THE POVERTY ASSESSMENT: a wide range of government line ministries as part of the preparation of the poverty assessment and later to share the findings of the report. National workshops were convened with a cross-section of stakeholders. By the time the assessment was completed, consensus had been achieved through dialogue. However, some ministries were not widely aware of the report. Officials in the Ministry of Planning and Economic Policy-the implementing agency-as well as in the Second Vice President's Office felt that although the Bank had made an agreement with the previous government to undertake the poverty assessment, the consultations with the new government had been less extensive.

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PROCESS: National consultants were contracted to undertake the PPA. Because of the political commitment to alleviate poverty, high-level government officials supported the PPA from the beginning. Senior advisors from the Planning Ministry were involved and are now committed to incorporating the results into the analysis of poverty. They are in direct contact with the minister and have the ability to influence policy. However, the involvement of other line

ministries has so far been limited, to the extent that the PPA was described by one government agency as "the secret study." In addition, there was limited consultation with the NGO community. However, the ministry is now committed to the wide dissemination of what it perceives to be a valid and credible document. The dissemination process should result in wider ownership.

There is confusion over the ownership of information contained in the PPA. In the implementing ministry, information was felt to be the property of the World Bank. Nevertheless, government officials were eager to publish the PPA results without waiting for completion of the poverty assessment, since they considered the PPA a valid stand-alone document with clear and implementable policy messages. In addition, they were concerned that the final poverty assessment would not reflect the findings of the PPA. Permission to print and disseminate the information was finally gained, nine months after the government's initial request.

Methodology-beneficiary assessment

The field work for the PPA was undertaken in December 1994 and lasted one month. Seven sites were selected from the government's National Plan to Combat Poverty, which had identified the poorest areas. A cross-section of rural, periurban, and urban communities was selected. The fieldwork included a combination of individual interviews and focus group discussions. A team of researchers was selected from students at the university and recent graduates. Senior government officials assisted in the field work. A consultant from the United States trained the team in interviewing techniques. During the pilot phase in one community, techniques were refined and a manual was written by the research team. The final report was written by a multidisciplinary team. The total cost of the study was US\$36,500.

Value Added

The PPA found that housing is a major priority of the poor (up to one third of the PPA report focused on housing). Twenty percent of those surveyed felt that housing was a major goal before any other material possession; 20 percent felt that one of their most serious problems was not having a home; and 50 percent of the families felt that their houses were in poor condition, with, for example, poor or incomplete roofing or an earth floor.

Other priorities of those interviewed included poor quality of services in health centers; lack of day care centers in urban areas; and the need for more effective transport services and feeder roads to take their goods to market. Although literacy rates were high (94.6 percent for females and 94.4 for males), secondary education was not perceived as a priority in a majority of households in either urban or rural areas.

Links to Policy Change

The PPA approach is new to Costa Rica, and the director of the study felt that the process had been a learning experience. It was the first study in Costa Rica to undertake a nationwide survey using anthropological techniques. In the past, such studies were confined to small sections of the population and had a sector focus. The lack of sector bias in the PPA enabled people to express priorities instead of focusing on predetermined sectors. Because senior government officials were involved in the studies at the community level, there was a greater understanding of and commitment to the PPA approach within the Ministry of Planning. Ministry officials felt that the PPA approach could have a wider impact in the future. Rather than serving as an add-on to the poverty assessment, the PPA is being treated as a building block to gain a wider understanding of poverty issues. Ministry officials see a need for more participatory studies in the future.

Lessons for Increasing Impact

1) Increase ownership

Overall, broad ownership of the PPA study was limited despite the fact that government officials were included from the beginning. Ministry officials felt that the delay in approving publication of the findings reduced the credibility of the information in the PPA. The Minister of Planning and Economic Policy had already read the PPA and agreed with the conclusions but was reluctant to pass it on to the Vice President and the other ministers.

2) Include a wider range of stakeholders

The extent to which other stakeholders could have been involved and the timing of their inclusion were subjects of debate. The ministry felt that including a wider range of stakeholders during preparation would complicate the process. The Ministry now plans to undertake a series of workshops at the national and regional levels to disseminate the findings among a wider cross-section of stakeholders.

The Association of Latin America NGOs felt that many groups had information and experience that could have been valuable during preparation of the PPA, and that involving a wider range of stakeholders would have created broader support for the policy recommendations.

For example, the Central American Council of Cooperatives had already undertaken significant work on how poor people have been affected by various social and economic policies. The NGO association also felt that the information in the PPA could have been cross-referenced with existing studies to make the conclusions more representative.

The Ministry of Planning now intends to involve the NGOs extensively in the ongoing dialogue.

3) **Dissemination of the study**

Impact of the PPA should increase now that the government is able to disseminate the information. Some government agencies feel they can apply the approach effectively in their own work. For example, the Social Welfare Fund is attempting to work directly with local government, and fund officials stated that the approach could assist district councils in identifying community priorities. In addition, the coordinating body for the National Plan to Combat Poverty commented that the PPA would be relevant to their work of realigning the program to meet community needs. Dissemination of the study to communities could help build national ownership and awareness and increase involvement of communities in the poverty debate. However, a ministry official commented that feedback had already been given to communities during the fieldwork and that communities would be more interested in proposed interventions than in the findings of the PPA. To increase impact of the PPA, it could be disseminated through existing communication structures to broaden the policy debate. Costa Rica already has an effective communications strategy for social issues. Recent campaigns have included awareness of health and domestic violence issues. Through the use of these existing structures, the PPA could become a vehicle for deepening the understanding of poverty.

Case Study 3: Mozambique

Background

The PPA was sponsored by the Poverty Alleviation Unit (Department of Population and Social Development) of the National Directorate of Planning in the Ministry of Planning and Finance, and financed by the Department for International Development (DFID) and the World Bank through the Dutch Trust Fund for Poverty Assessments.

Process

THE POLICY DIALOGUE: The PPA was initiated in late 1994 to correspond with the government's preparation of a poverty assessment and was motivated by the need for qualitative insights on poverty at the household and community levels. The objectives of the exercise were to contribute to government policy formulation by the Poverty Alleviation Unit in the Ministry of Planning; sharpen the focus on poverty alleviation in donors' work programs; contribute to a broader understanding of livelihood trends and changes in the country; and enhance the capacity of the *Universidade Eduardo Mondlane* at Maputo, the Poverty Alleviation Unit, and collaborating agencies to carry out participatory research.

The specific objectives of the Mozambique PPA, as set out in the initial discussion paper, were to explore, in poor rural and urban communities, the following:

* The main concerns, problems, and priorities in people's lives; how these have changed since the peace accord; how they differ according to gender; and the perceived constraints to addressing poverty problems * Local conceptions of relative well-being; causes of vulnerability and seasonal stress; and the nature and effectiveness of community coping mechanisms, household survival strategies, and other (government/ NGO) safety nets * Perceptions of social service delivery: access, quality, and cost of different service providers (public, traditional, NGO)

- Access to land: security and conflict in tenure, and situations under which terms of entitlement are changing.

- Access to infrastructure, markets, and other social and economic services; and the barriers that limit access to income and participation in markets, employment, and so forth

The PPA was structured in three phases:

Phase I: a preparatory phase to produce preliminary poverty profiles using wealth and problem rankings and priority needs assessments from two districts in each of the country's 10 provinces.

Preparation for Phase I began in February 1995 and involved broad consultation with the government and the NGO, donor, and research communities;

Phase II: to more closely define the research agenda, with much of the work subcontracted to partner NGOs, which carried out extended livelihood assessments in fieldwork areas and compiled poverty data for five provinces. Fieldwork for Phase II was carried out between September and December 1996; and

Phase III: a short follow-up in rural sites to capture aspects of seasonality through supplementary fieldwork in selected communities; completion of overall PPA synthesis, documentation, and dissemination. Feedback on progress of the PPA was provided through regular meetings with the Poverty Alleviation Unit and line ministries, donors, NGOs, and the research community. Emerging findings from the PPA were disseminated through the national press and numerous workshops and seminars within and outside Mozambique, including through the Red Cross and the UNDP Poverty Forum.

In addition, PPA outcomes were integrated into poverty analysis and participatory methodologies in academic and practical courses at the *Universidade Eduardo Mondlane*. Information on PPA methodology and materials was also provided to various local and international NGOs and to donors. All PPA documentation has been freely available to the public.

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PROCESS: The methodology for the PPA was a mix of participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques including semistructured conversational interviewing, direct observation, and also more complex visual research methods such as thematic mapping, seasonality diagramming, wealth ranking, institutional mapping, and trend and livelihood analysis.

Value Added

* A qualitative approach based on direct observation enabled researchers to be more flexible and open to the concerns of the poor and to encourage their direct participation.

* A real strength of the PPA approach has been its inclusion of multidisciplinary researchers and multiple stakeholders. This approach has also strengthened relationships among the participating institutions (the university, the government, and NGOs).

* The PRA approach enabled communities to become more conscious of their life conditions, opportunities, strengths, and limitations.

This is particularly important because the government does not have the capacity to help the poor in many areas of the country.

The PPA has made a considerable impact through the participatory process. The participation of a variety of local institutions and stakeholders was encouraged: collaborating NGOs (partners in fieldwork in Phase II) benefited directly, while nonparticipating NGOs have used field data for improved targeting and poverty mapping data for longer term planning; working groups in sector ministries have used information on specific sector issues (such as health, water, livestock); and Ministry of Social Action and other institutions nominated staff for PRA training and seconded staff to participate as members of the field teams.

Institutional issues

The PPA was adopted by the Poverty Alleviation Unit in the Ministry of Planning and Finance and contracted to the *Centro de Estudos de Populafao* at the *Universidade Eduardo Mondlane* (CEP-UEM). The emphasis on local ownership resulted in the PPA process being successfully internalized in the strategic poverty work of the Poverty Alleviation Unit. In institutional terms, Phase II provided for increased emphasis on partnerships, particularly with NGOs under subcontract, to carry out fieldwork or analyze poverty data in their areas of operation. This feature of Phase II allowed for the realization of the capacity-strengthening component of the PPA. Collaborating NGOs benefited from training and from guidance in poverty-sensitive community assessments as a consequence of their participation in the exercise.

The government's assessment of the PPA

The director of the Poverty Alleviation Unit gave a presentation at the workshop in which she underscored the value of the PPA as a source of community-level information on rural livelihood conditions in this postwar period (and given the lack of data because of conflict conditions).

The PPA has been closely consulted by a number of ministries- Education, Health, Labor, Youth and Culture, Social Action, and Environment-as they formulate development plans. The Poverty Alleviation Unit has also used the PPA results to evaluate proposed government strategies and test the validity of strategic priorities. The PPA has highlighted the heterogeneity of poverty and the complexities inherent in different regions and among different social groups of the poor, and has encouraged the Poverty Alleviation Unit to systematically monitor poverty in selected districts. Despite this interest at the national level, there are limitations to what the PPA can achieve because locally specific descriptive material might not be applicable at the macroeconomic level. PPAs can be valuable at the microeconomic level, however-especially if conjoined with other survey results-even if they do not directly influence policy.

In terms of institutional linkage, the bridge between the Poverty Alleviation Unit and the university was considered to be extremely beneficial, and both parties hope that their collaboration will continue.

An assessment by NGO partners

During the field research, a representative from the NGO Kulima, from Inhambane, suggested that involvement by subcontract in Phase II of the PPA enabled the NGO to achieve greater understanding of communities with which they work and learn new methods for community development, especially methods for targeting vulnerable groups. With this experience, Kulima expects to scale up its participatory approach in priority needs assessments and project support. The representative also said that CEP-UEM could have provided more technical support in training and report writing. A representative from Concern, an international NGO, noted that its participation in the PPA contributed to internal planning and programming in Nampula province. She also referred to potential conflicts in PPA outcomes, particularly if community action plans are not consistent with government priorities for a district.

Enhancing in-country capacity in participatory methodologies

An important feature of Phase II was the development of a PRA participation network (*a rede de PRA*). Through this network, PRA approaches and methods have evolved and spread rapidly, but research and process documentation are still sorely lacking. The PRA network aims to facilitate the sharing of experiences and critical reflection. It has successfully hosted several open meetings attended by representatives of government, donors, the university, and NGOs.

Links to Policy Change

Although policymakers generally recognize the value of the PPA, many have serious reservations about using qualitative findings from microeconomic level field studies to inform the national policy debate and create macroeconomic level policy.

However, certain policy-relevant information is immediately apparent from the PPA. First, outputs from wealth-ranking and problemranking exercises in the poverty assessments show who the poor are and their priority concerns. Second, the results of aggregated livelihood analyses show the multidimensional reality of deprivation.

In policy terms, the PPA has contributed to the poverty profiles of the Poverty Alleviation Unit; to sector working groups; to NGO operations and programming; and to policy debates on livelihoods and poverty. It has also given rise to a process of participatory poverty monitoring and to an effective network of alliances among local and national NGOs, research institutes, and government agencies. Regarding the PPA's substantive contributions to a general understanding of poverty in Mozambique, the following were considered key outputs from the work:

- * Phase I poverty profile outputs were based on wealth ranking in communities and on a comprehensive poverty mapping exercise using available data in Maputo and the provinces. As expected, the participatory poverty mapping contributed a more nuanced composite profile and challenged the somewhat heterogeneous categorizing of better-off south, average center, poor north, which has characterized much of the poverty debate. The PPA, by contrast, found poverty to be highly dispersed throughout the country, district by district. Furthermore, wealth ranking revealed community members' understanding of community-level stratification (generally defined by four levels of relative well-being).

- * Phase I and Phase II analysis of the linkage between isolation and poverty highlighted both the negative deprivation-inducing dimensions of isolation and positive impacts such as social stability and environmental and natural resource balance.

- * Problem ranking in rural communities provided ample evidence of the reasoning behind long-term survival strategies, most of which were based on physical labor. The site reports showed consensus in the communities on entitlements for social welfare, identification of the most vulnerable (the elderly and the physically incapacitated), and identification of those who are capable of working and should not receive formal welfare assistance.

- * The PRA tools of problem ranking and matrix analysis were designed to evaluate two sets of priorities, one relating directly to livelihood issues and the other to the services needed to sustain

those livelihoods (and people's lives). The summary priority needs assessment from the PPA is often presented as follows:

1. Roads/transport
2. Commercial networks/markets
3. Water
4. Health
5. Education

Social services such as water, health, and education were identified as priorities by all communities. That they often were ranked after access, mobility, and infrastructure concerns probably reflects a perception that health, education, and water services are unlikely to be extended to inaccessible areas. Women, however, consistently gave health and other social services the higher rankings. Of interest in the problem-ranking exercises was the lack of reference to consumption as a dimension of poverty at the household level, suggesting that household food security is not a common comparator of relative well-being among households. It was also surprising that rural extension ranked very low, suggesting either that extension is not effective or that it is not considered a priority. When probed, respondents expressed satisfaction with local technical knowledge.

Lessons for Increasing Impact

1) Key issues for PPA design

* Community priorities change over time in response to many social, political, and economic factors. It is important to take this into consideration in conceptualizing a policy dialogue mediated by PRA type interlocutor mechanisms with communities.

* PRA can be an important tool for facilitating continual dialogue between policymakers and communities, and for defining policies and strategies for implementing poverty alleviation programs.

* It is important to fuse material outputs from both qualitative and quantitative research approaches and to couple qualitative and quantitative information on community priorities for action with the

global policies and strategies of government and policymakers.

* PRA should not be used simply as a diagnostic test to assess poverty but also as a monitoring tool at the community level. It should be exploited to its fullest potential, enabling community members to participate and make decisions at the local level on development programs that affect them.

2) **Limitations of PRA**

Limitations of the PRA method include the potential mismatch between the rapid application of research methods and the gradual and sometimes paralyzed pace of development; the problem of transferability and replicability of methods from one village or region to another; the raising of expectations and community research fatigue; and the need for thorough training to ensure quality of facilitation.

3) **Weaknesses of the approach**

Weaknesses of the PPA approach include:

- * Little standardization of criteria for the selection of community informants, and a continuing tendency-despite efforts at reversal-to interview community leaders and the more visible, articulate, and sociable members of the community;
- * Difficulty on the part of community members in understanding the point of particular rapid appraisal methods, particularly visualization exercises such as institutional diagramming;
- * Limited time in the field and limited time for *preparation* of fieldwork;
- * Difficulty in analyzing participatory research material and drafting a summary report that reflects all interviews and community-level interactions; and

- * No satisfactory means to address the problems of raising expectations and community fatigue with research teams.

4) **Recommendations for future work**

Future PPA work should:

- * Clearly explain the research objectives to the community. Researchers should also have a thorough knowledge of the locale and of previous work conducted in the research areas. Fieldwork should not duplicate information available from previous assignments.
- * Elicit *insiders'* knowledge and experience of how to confront community-level problems (researchers should not rely on the strong opinions of district administrators, for example).
- * Match the issues under investigation with the right mix of skills in the research team (particularly the gender mix of team). Research teams should also have the skills to use different methods in sequence and to overcome unanticipated obstacles.

5) **Main conclusions**

The PPA has shown that

- * Participatory methods can be useful for generating insights relevant to a poverty reduction strategy and that these local-level insights can be *selectively* translated to the national policy agenda.

- * Involving government policymakers in the PPA process will enhance its policy impact.
- * Systematically involving local NGOs for direct follow-up on community concerns and community-generated action plans is beneficial.
- * The participatory process is useful as a means of encouraging debate on poverty.
- * There is no perfect method for poverty assessment, and methodological approaches and tools still need to be practiced and perfected.

Self-critical reflection will lead to improved poverty assessments and to improved dissemination and learning.

- * Assessing and alleviating poverty is a long-term effort, and PPAs should be structured with this understanding in mind.

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