a rough guide to PPAs

Participatory Poverty Assessment

An introduction to theory and practice

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Acknowledgements/Preface

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Contents

Glossary of acronyms

DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
HEPR	Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction Programme (Vietnam)
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Countries (eligible for debt relief under HIPC initiative)
IFIs	International Financial Institutions (IMF, World Bank, Regional Development Banks)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
I-PRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (Vietnam)
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan (of Government of Uganda)
PLA	Participatory Learning and Action
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PWG	Poverty Working Group (Vietnam case study)
SCF	Save the Children Fund
SDA	Social Development Adviser
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

SECTION 1
Objectives of this guide

Recent years have seen a rapid expansion of efforts to applying participatory approaches to promoting policy change. The so-called 'participatory poverty assessment' has formed a major part of this. This handbook was commissioned to fill a gap in the current literature on participatory research and policy – namely practical guidance for development practitioners. The things we aim to do are:

- ■ Summarise key messages from recent experience

- ■ Provide guidance on appraising at the country level whether a PPA might make a useful contribution to improving the effectiveness of poverty reduction policy

- ■ Provide guidance to designing the process to ensure that the PPA will have a beneficial impact on policy

- ■ Provide help in finding useful literature and technical assistance.

The handbook should be more useful early in the process of conceiving and designing a PPA – rather than later. This reflects reality, inasmuch as once policy and operational processes are up and running the variations in the institutional context mean that generic guidance is likely to become less useful. Nonetheless, those trying to work with and manage participatory policy research might still find a summary of recent experience useful, even at later stages in the process.

In approaching the task of writing, we are acutely aware that there is a substantial tradition within participatory research and practice which argues that handbooks, toolkits, manuals and other similar devices are a bad idea. They are seen as having the following dangers:

- ■ Undermining the self-confidence of people facing real problems and situations from making choices using their own best judgement.

- ■ Establishing an 'expert discourse' about processes that by their nature are not best led by external 'experts'.

- ■ Laying down blueprints for approaches and processes that cannot be managed by applying rigid plans.

Bearing in mind the above, we will try to avoid giving blueprints – and focus on assisting development professionals to use their own judgement with some guidance from experience. Among the questions which might need addressing in a PPA process are the following:

- ■ How to assess whether a PPA will be useful

- ■ How to decide where the PPA should be located institutionally

- ■ How to build the initial partnerships

- ■ How to find good technical assistance

- ■ How to design the PPA process

- ■ How to enhance quality in the fieldwork and analysis.

The handbook is structured to provide answers to these questions. The handbook is divided into three sections, following this introduction. Section 2 deals with the nature of PPAs, and their history and origins. The third section takes the reader through various functional stages in the development of a PPA – with basic guidance in what information is needed to make informed decisions, and what the key considerations will be at each point. This section also considers potential future directions for development practice arising out of the experience of PPAs. The final section of the handbook provides two case studies that illustrate in practice the process of conceiving, designing and implementing a PPA.

SECTION 2

An introduction to Participatory Poverty Assessments – concepts, origins and history

2.1   What are Participatory Poverty Assessments?

For the purposes of this guide a participatory poverty assessment can be defined as *an instrument for including poor people's views in the analysis of poverty and the formulation of strategies to reduce it through public policy.*

The purpose of PPAs is to improve the effectiveness of public actions aimed at poverty reduction. PPAs are generally carried out as policy research exercises, linked to governmental policy processes, aimed at understanding poverty from the perspective of poor people – and what their priorities are in terms of actions to improve their lives.[1] PPAs can strengthen poverty assessment processes through:

- broadening stakeholder involvement and thereby increasing general support and legitimacy for anti-poverty strategies;

- enriching the analysis and understanding of poverty by including the perspectives of the poor;

- providing a diverse range of valuable information on a cost-effective, rapid and timely basis,

- creating new relationships between policy-makers, service providers and people in poor communities.

PPAs may be initiated by a variety of different kinds of institutions, including NGOs, donors and research institutions. They may address different audiences – including policy-makers, politicians, advocates and activists. This manual focuses primarily on their use as a tool for influencing public policy of developing country governments. There is no blueprint of content or of method for PPAs. The common element that unites the various exercises known under this name is the rationale – *If a government or an institution is to develop a strategy for reducing poverty, it makes sense to include the views of poor people in the process of developing and implementing that strategy.* This case can be made on a number of levels, encompassing both moral and technical dimensions. Essentially there are three components to the rationale:

- Enhancing *conceptualisation and understanding*. It has become commonly accepted in development theory and practice that poverty is best viewed as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, with a strong locally specific character. Participatory research has contributed heavily to the evolution of this understanding.[2] It has an accepted place in the range of methods used to explore the multiple dimensions of deprivation in development policy

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[1] Including a link to the formulation of public policy is important to make the definition meaningful in scope. A huge body of experience (beyond the scope of this paper) of assessing poverty to design action by community based organisations or NGOs is excluded.

[2] Reflected in the preparation drafts of the Poverty Reduction guidelines for the DAC, and the draft of WDR 2000/01.

research.[3] Attempts by policy analysts to identify causes of poverty (and policy actions that might address them) should also benefit from an understanding of what people in poor communities see as the causes of poverty and deprivation.

■ Enhancing *participation and accountability*. Participatory practice aims to strengthen the degree of influence of people over decisions that affect their lives. In the case of a PPA it also seeks to give poor people an influence over policies and programmes designed for their ostensible benefit. Participation is a value in its own right – expressing aspirations for enhanced agency, empowerment and autonomy, especially for those who are excluded, voiceless and marginalised.

■ Enhancing *policy effectiveness*. Initiatives to address problems of poverty and deprivation are more likely to be effective if they address issues that the poor themselves consider important, through institutional channels that they value. The effectiveness of poverty reduction policy can also be enhanced through a PPA by the inclusion of a broad range of civil society actors in its formulation (research institutes, NGOs and local governments as well as participating communities). This offers the opportunity for strengthening the perceived legitimacy of the strategy, and thereby the level of stakeholder ownership and support.[4]

As much of the rest of this section will outline, practice in PPAs has been evolving. Early PPAs tended to be focused on producing texts for donor agency analysis – while some more recent PPAs are focused on the policy process of the country concerned. Among the activities that can be included in PPA processes are the following:

■ *Review of existing analysis and research* carried out in poor communities using participatory approaches

■ *Field research* in poor communities – involving travelling research teams engaged in participatory research at the community level

■ *Policy analysis* using inputs from PPAs and other sources of information and analysis to influence policy development

■ *Training* of NGO, research institutes, central/local level government staff in methods and approaches for engaging with people in poor communities for research, consultation, planning and action

■ *Creating new networks* and relationships within processes of policy formulation and poverty assessment.

Section 3 comprises the 'how to' section of the manual and will go into more detail on operational aspects of PPAs. In looking at the potential benefits of this kind of exercise, however, it is useful to review something of the background and development of PPAs.

2.2   The story – history and origins of PPAs

The term Participatory Poverty Assessment originally referred to a field based research exercise designed to contribute to country poverty assessments. The name was coined within the World Bank in 1992. At that point staff in the World Bank were developing approaches to meet the request from the Bank's Board that 'Country Poverty Assessments' be carried out in all borrower countries. The dominant approaches were derived from the guidance contained in the Bank's 'Poverty Reduction Handbook' (1992). They laid heavy emphasis on quantitative analysis of material derived from household surveys. The analytical centrepiece was a 'poverty line' that grouped households above and below a line based on their levels of consumption as measured through interviews carried out with households selected by a random sampling method. This

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[3] Carvalho and White (1997), Booth et al (1998).

[4] Booth et al (1998).

formed the basis of the poverty profile – the section of the poverty assessment that outlined the demographic, social and economic characteristics of the poor. Country poverty assessments were carried out in all the borrower countries of the World Bank – and formed a major part of the analytical work sponsored by the donor community in the early to mid-1990s.

As the methodology and approach for poverty assessments was being developed a range of individuals and institutions argued for a broadening of the conceptual and methodological approach to the assessment of poverty. It was argued that a conventional money-metric poverty line analysis might be inadequate to capture a range of significant dimensions of deprivation. This critique focused on the following issues:

■ *The multi-dimensional quality of deprivation:* A range of factors apart from low income and material want are significant in the experience of deprivation, including: social and physical isolation; powerlessness and lack of voice; low social status; and physical, bodily weakness.

■ *The unit of analysis:* Questionnaire surveys of the type advocated by the Bank's Poverty Reduction Handbook generally aggregate material at the level of the household. They are thus not strong instruments for analysing intra-household elements of poverty (differences by gender and age), or elements of poverty which might apply predominantly at the level of the community (such as poor access to infrastructure, or grazing lands and other common pool resources).

■ *Vulnerability and dynamic processes:* A single poverty line exercise captures a snapshot in time according to the consumption measure. In the absence of other complementary quantitative or qualitative exercises it does not capture dynamic dimensions of change over time – including seasonal variations in access to food, health status, income etc., and vulnerability to shocks of various kinds and the negative impacts of long-term trends.

There was also a strong impetus to find a vehicle for including social analysis within the frameworks for analysing poverty used in poverty assessments, as well as economic analysis. These arguments came from various sources – social development professionals within the World Bank, the donor community at large, the research community in development studies, and the countries where poverty assessments were to be carried out. To a large extent the Participatory Poverty Assessment became the vehicle for these various aspirations and critiques. It offered an operational method that could feed empirical material into the process of poverty assessment. It was also backed up by a powerful rationale – outlined above – that encompassed moral as well as technical arguments. Many of the issues PPAs raised have now become part of the mainstream position on the analysis and assessment of poverty. Quantitative methods (within the Bank and elsewhere) have evolved to take much more account of a broader view of poverty – one which encompasses concerns with powerlessness, vulnerability and isolation as aspects of the causes and experience of poverty.

Early PPAs were thus field research exercises, generally funded in whole or part by donor agencies other than the World Bank[5] – but with the intention of contributing to the analysis in a Bank-led country poverty assessment. By 1998 Robb was able to look back on the experience of PPAs within poverty assessments conducted by the World Bank.[6] She found that 43 out of 98 country poverty assessments had included an exercise called a PPA – although these varied considerably in terms of scale, ambition and quality. At one extreme there were very short exercises taking two to three weeks and geared to producing little more than illustrative case study 'boxes' to lend a human face to a document. At the other extreme, some were large-scale field research exercises lasting up to eight months, with formal linkages to poverty monitoring systems and other parts of government.

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[5] These were mostly bilateral development agencies – notably UK DFID, the Swedish International Development Agency, and Dutch development co-operation.

[6] Robb (1999). Robb's thorough survey of the Bank experiences does not include PPAs conducted outside the World Bank in this period, which were outside the TOR for that study. For example, the Bengladesh PPA conducted in 1996 as a contribution to the UNDP Human Development Report, and the district level PPAs produced in Ghana by CEDEP with funding from Save the Children Fund UK (Dogbe 1998).

Despite the limited ambitions implied by the poverty assessment context, some PPAs did achieve broader impacts. Among the examples of 'process outcomes' arising from the early PPAs are the following:

■ *Institutional development in civil society:* In Zambia, the loose consultants' network which carried out the fieldwork for the original Participatory Poverty Assessment constituted itself into an NGO (the Participatory Assessment Group) which continued to carry out participatory studies to contribute to policy development processes. The Centre for the Development of People in Ghana has developed a capacity for engaging in policy research and advocacy building on its involvement in the Ghana PPA.[7]

■ *Integration into poverty monitoring systems:* The Participatory Assessment Group was incorporated in the poverty monitoring system of the Zambian Government. Activities included carrying out follow up PPAs[8], and studies on specific topics suggested by policy makers.

On the whole, however, the first generation of PPAs were largely limited in conception to a focus on field research, according to agendas largely derived from donor agency concerns, and implemented as a one-off exercise. Their capacity to influence policy and process in the countries they were carried out was largely dependent on the quality of the dialogue with government established within the broader poverty assessment. To a large extent they reflected a weakness of the overall programme of country poverty assessments – summarised in a range of studies and evaluations: that country level ownership of the process and conclusions of poverty assessments tended to be weak.[9]

2.3 The evolution of PPAs – second generation approaches

As Box 1 outlines, the emphasis in development practice has moved increasingly towards recognising the need for strong leadership of poverty reduction policy by countries themselves (governments and civil society). One of the particular strengths of PPAs in this regard can be seen as creating relationships which bring new actors into policy processes – something which will be explored in the rest of this manual largely through the experiences of the two main case studies.

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[7] Dogbe (1998) describes the process and outcomes of the Ghana PPA for CEDEP.

[8] Such as PAG 1995.

[9] IDS (1994), Hanmer et al, ISSAS (1996), Booth et al (1998)

Box 1 Changes in contemporary development practice

Contemporary currents of change in the aspirations for development practice have two main components:

■ The framework within which donors provide balance of payments and budgetary support to developing countries is changing. The over-arching framework for such assistance from International Financial Institutions and other donors is now supposed to be provided by a country-led Poverty Reduction Strategy. These changes build on two new premises for donor action. Firstly, that poverty reduction is the goal behind all donor flows provided to poor countries on concessional terms (even from the IMF), and secondly, that leadership of the policy process must come from within the country itself if it is to be effective and sustainable.

■ In general the donor community is seeking increasingly to provide its assistance as contributions to the mainstream planning, budgeting and implementation processes of partner institutions. For work with governments in developing countries this implies donors accepting less direct control over some government actions than a project approach provided them. In return donors (to account for their resources against the purpose for which they are provided) must seek to use their resources to lever pro-poor change in policies of the institutions with which they work. This change in approach is evident in changing instruments for donor co-operation (such as sector-wide approaches) and in changing thinking about the nature of partnerships. There are implications for the instruments that donors use to deliver assistance, for the attitude, skills and behaviour of donor staff, and also for the time-frames within which policy goals are set, and commitments to support offered.

In short, the role of donor agencies is increasingly interpreted in a different way. Instead of seeking to show direct use of donor resources for reducing poverty – and account for their funds against this – donors are seeking instead to use their influence to *facilitate broad based pro-poor change in public policy.*

These new aspirations are not without their own contradictions and problems.[10] The Uganda case study offered in section 4 of this handbook suggests that PPAs can offer a very valuable contribution in this new environment. The essence of the change in orientation is that *PPAs need to be geared to the policy, budget and institutional processes of the countries in which they are carried out.* Some key feature of the Uganda PPA that allow for this are:

■ It is institutionally located within the Uganda Ministry of Finance and Development Planning.

■ Officials of that ministry were centrally involved in determining the structure and objectives of the PPA.

■ Its management and governance structures involve ministry staff (as well and civil society and donor representatives).

■ It forms part of a policy process with strong commitment by Uganda's political leaders (the Poverty Eradication Action Plan).

The contrast between the first and second-generation approaches to PPAs is further elaborated in Table 1 below.

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[10] For discussions of issues in PRSPs see McGee with Norton (2000) and Edgerton et al (2000). For a discussion of social development issues in sector approaches see Norton and Bird (1998).

Table 1 – Approaches to PPAs

	First generation PPAs	**Second generation PPAs**
Focus of PPA process	Generating textual representation of realities of the poor, to contribute to policy recommendations.	Creating new relationships within the policy process – bridging public policy, civil society, people in poor communities, donor agencies.
Means of influencing policy change	PPA influences donor country assessment document (country poverty assessment). PPA a 'product' which seeks to influence another product. Policy influence therefore largely contingent on the quality of the policy process associated with the overall document.	PPA influences country policy-making processes: budget process (pro-poor allocation of public resources); sector policy; regulatory function (land reform, informal sector); poverty monitoring system; local government policy and budget processes.
Institutional location	Designed/supervised by donor agency staff. Donor 'publishes' PPA. PPA managed and implemented by NGO or research institute, chosen by the donor according to criteria of technical and logistical competence to deliver PPA report.	Chosen to maximise potential contributions to policy process. Institutional partnerships created to introduce logistical and technical capacity (e.g. Oxfam managing process within Ministry of Finance in Uganda)
Time-frame	Period necessary to complete one round of national fieldwork and generate report.	Process approach allowing for PPA to work with planning and budget formulation processes at national, sectoral and local levels. 'National PPA' may or may not be produced. Follow up with specific studies possible
Substantive focus	Focus on: Poor people's understandings of poverty and deprivation, Constraints in accessing public benefits and services, Poor people's priorities for public policy.	*As in left column, but with increasing emphasis on:* Access to information for action for people in poor communities; Governance, accountability and transparency.
Key skills	*For PPA implementation* Social analysis (synthesis of results) Training skills in research field methods Research design Logistical support Policy analysis	*For PPA implementation* Social analysis (synthesis of results) Training skills in research field methods Research design Logistical support Policy analysis *For Policy mainstreaming* Understanding of macro policy, sector policy and budget formulation processes Advocacy skills Institutional change management

While the opportunity to contribute to the development of poverty reduction policies through public systems at the central government level is valuable, there is also plenty of experience to suggest that under less favourable circumstances PPAs can still make a valuable contribution. Where government commitment to poverty reduction is weak, or where there is not openness to working with either participatory methods, or civil society institutions outside of government, PPAs can still produce a number of possible very valuable outcomes. These may include:

- Stimulating public debate about the nature of poverty and its causes – and raising in that debate issues which might otherwise not be taken account of. [11]

- Assisting non-governmental institutions to better understand the nature and causes of poverty, ill-being and the denial of rights, to further their work.

- Assisting poor communities to make claims on public service provision. [12]

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[11] The 23 country case study undertaken to inform the World Development Report 2000/01 has fulfilled this role within the preparation process of that document. See Narayan et al (2000)

In reality, much practice lies between the two models presented above – incorporating elements of both. In this guide we will seek to help practitioners to work out the possibilities which exist under different circumstances and conditions – and design a process appropriate to the conditions they face.

2.4 Ill-being, vulnerability, voice and exclusion – the conceptual territory of PPAs

We indicated above that PPAs promote a different approach to poverty to that taken by conventional analysis. This section will briefly expand on the nature of these differences, and the implications.

The conceptual approach to deprivation in participatory poverty assessments emerged from a tradition of research and practice stretching back to the 1960s. Participatory approaches differ from conventional forms of research in terms of both their ethics and their epistemology – or approach to what knowledge is and how it is generated.[13]

Some of the key elements of this tradition which affect its view of what deprivation is and how we can understand it are the following:

■ The construction of knowledge is seen as the result of social processes – debates and interactions among different actors with different perceptions and interests.

■ The different actors exercise different levels of influence over the outcome – and the broad concepts and understandings that emerge are thus influenced by structures of power and authority. To give the simplest and most empirically common example – where the conceptualisation of poverty reflects prevailing cultural gender biases, then forms of deprivation which particularly and specifically affect women are likely to be excluded from consideration.

Methodologically the key difference is that in the participatory enquiry paradigm the outside researcher tries not to predetermine the constructs by which poverty is assessed, analysed and measured[14]. Researchers instead seek to engage with the framework of understanding which the participants have of the 'good-life' (well-being) and its converse.

The conceptual territory illuminated by this kind of approach was initially very different from that encompassed by the orthodoxy of quantitative approaches to poverty analysis in the early 1990s. Some of the particular areas to emerge have been the following:

■ A view of poverty and deprivation as being multidimensional in character – an interlocking set of factors which reinforce ill-being in individuals and communities[15]

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[12] An example of this is the use made of site reports from the *Consultations with the Poor* process in a poor community in Recife in Brazil. A strong community leadership was able to use the report (both directly, and through stimulating interest from local news media) to gain access to political figures and apply pressure for improvements in delivery by local services. See Adam et al (2001)

[13] Epistemology is the branch of philosophy which studies the nature and claims of knowledge. It addresses two basic questions: what can we know and how do we know what we know?

[14] The consumption-based poverty line is an example of an 'outsider' construct which does not correspond to any understanding of well-being that would be found among non-specialists – being based on a set of technical exercises incorporating aggregating and weighting a variety of reported dimensions, including cash expenditures and cash values imputed by the researchers to own-produced food items. It may be justified as a tool of generalisation and comparison – but to communicate effectively with non-specialists the technical nature of the measure needs to be explained.

[15] For an influential depiction of this see Chambers formulation of the 'deprivation trap' (1983)

- A concern with understanding the nature of the experience of poverty as poor people see and report it

- A concern with powerlessness as a determinant and consequence of deprivation

- A concern with the dynamic dimensions of poverty, and issues of vulnerability to shocks, cyclical deprivation (e.g. seasonal hunger and disease) and long-term trends

- An emphasis on understanding the key assets which poor individuals, households and communities use to face up to threats and build their livelihoods

- A view of assets which comprises social dimensions (networks, the capacity to make claims), as well as financial, material, environmental and human dimensions

- A concern to differentiate between dimensions of poverty which apply at different levels of organisation – e.g. the community as against the household or individuals.

- A concern with intra-household dimensions of poverty – especially gender.

Some areas of emphasis in PPAs have been conditioned largely by demands from policy makers – seeking to provide particular information which can be applied to instigate pro-poor policy change. These include:

- An emphasis on eliciting the priorities and preferences of participants with respect to public policy choices

- A concern to identify inherent or socially-constructed characteristics of individuals as sources of differential vulnerability (gender, age, childlessness, health status, disability etc.) – with a view to assisting in the identification of policies to help the poorest

- A concern to identify the particular constraints which poor people experience in trying to access and benefit from public services and public policy – for example the common finding that poor people experience rudeness and hostility of front-line staff as a major disincentive to accessing public health care.

2.5 Functions of PPAs – points of engagement with the policy process

Influencing policy processes is rarely a matter of simply producing technocratic recommendations which are smoothly translated into changes in policy which then re-structure the actions of public agencies on the ground. In practice 'policy-making' is often a fairly chaotic area of activity – with multiple actors engaging with processes of change and contesting the substance of policy according to a variety of perceived interests. PPAs enter this arena with the intention of producing policy change that will produce benefits for poor people. They can work to do this in two broadly different ways – by either *enriching the knowledge base for designing policies to reduce poverty*, or *creating new political spaces for negotiation, empowerment and influence.* These can be seen as 'knowledge dimensions' of PPAs and 'process dimensions'. Each of these categories can be further divided.

2.5.1 Knowledge dimensions – enriching poverty information and analysis

The information functions of PPAs vary according to context and demand. The major different kinds of function are as follows:

- *Poverty assessment/analysis.* In relation to the assessment and analysis of poverty PPAs are expected to: enrich the conceptualisation of poverty through providing a multi-dimensional

view; enhance the understanding of the causal processes which underlie the reproduction of poverty by outlining stakeholder perceptions of causal relationships.

■ *Poverty/well-being monitoring.* This is an area where there are often significant expectations of PPAs from policy actors – but where there can also be significant misunderstandings. PPAs will not produce a precise pseudo-scientific measure of a single indicator (such as the number of people falling above or below a given 'poverty line') and thereby give a comforting sense that things are definitively getting better or worse. They will also not provide a definitive way of saying which region is better off than another and by what degree. PPAs can contribute to monitoring trends in poverty in the following ways: by eliciting people's perceptions of trends in well-being and factors that affect it (e.g. insecurity, inflation, markets, environmental decline); by highlighting significant indicators of well-being which can then be followed by more orthodox survey methods (e.g. the level of insecurity); by investigating trends in areas which are difficult to monitor through orthodox quantitative methods.[16]

■ *Outcome/policy monitoring.* The potential to monitor the level of awareness in poor communities of policies and programmes – and people's judgement of them – is one of the more significant dimensions of PPAs – and one which is highlighted in the Uganda case study in chapter 4. Significant areas which PPAs can throw light on include: the extent to which key government policies are known and understood (including any significant misconceptions); the perceived effects of those policies; the extent to which different institutions are trusted to deliver benefits. The advantage of PPAs is often in providing striking broad-brush impressions of a given programme. In Uganda, for example, the PPA produced a consistent finding that the principal government credit scheme was perceived as corrupt and inaccessible to the poor. Because of the vested interests involved a 'programme evaluation' would have been unlikely to produce a result of this clarity. Strong, simple and independent messages are of great value in identifying those areas of public policy which work roughly as intended – and those that don't.

All three of the above dimensions of a PPA can contribute to policy analysis and formulation. The information dimensions of a PPA will only directly affect real policy change, however, to the extent that a series of other conditions exist. An effective system for implementing policy change is obviously one of these – alongside a willingness to absorb and listen to the results by key stakeholders.

The balance of expectations of PPAs between the various functions related to information and analysis listed above will vary according to the situation. In general 'one-off' PPAs will be expected to contribute predominantly to the assessment and analysis of poverty. Other dimensions will become more significant where attempts are made to integrate a participatory approach into the ongoing structures of information used for policy formulation and analysis.

2.5.2 Process dimensions – creating spaces for negotiation, empowerment and influence

In addition to the dimensions of PPAs which relate to information and analysis, there are also outcomes which derive mostly from the nature of the process and the way in which it is structured. These can broadly be grouped as follows:

■ *Representation of priorities as a proxy for 'demand'.* In addition to providing information that contributes to analyses of the causes of poverty, participatory research can provide information that represents poor people's priorities for public action. These have tended to be some of the messages that have come across more strongly in policy terms. In Zambia Uganda and Ghana, for example, the PPA findings that poor people placed a high value on

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[16] Where there is a discrepancy between orthodox measures of poverty trends and PPAs there can be a number of contributing factors – aside from straightforward errors or biases. These are discussed in section 3.3.4 below. See McGee (2000) for a review of related issues in Uganda.

rural infrastructure provision (such as feeder roads and domestic water, especially for women) have led to public and donor institutions re-evaluating priorities in expenditure in those areas.

■ *Creating opportunities for advocacy and negotiating claims.* There is less documentation of this dimension of PPAs than there perhaps should be. In Uganda the findings of the PPA were taken up in local and national news media, as part of the general process of stimulating public debate. There are some examples where communities have been able to use PPA processes to make claims for improved access to services (Adam et al 2001).

■ *Bringing new actors into the policy process and creating new relationships in the policy process.* Most successful PPAs stimulate the creation of networks and relationships that carry on after the PPA. The sense that people in poor communities are able to offer a perspective on the causes of poverty that can help to make public policy more effective introduces new possibilities into the ways that decisions are made and resources allocated. This process also brings in a set of intermediary actors (NGOs, research institutions) which may not previously have been seen to have the capacity to make a contribution at this level. In both Ghana and Zambia the NGO which co-ordinated the PPA continued to be involved in policy processes on an extensive scale after the original exercise.[17] In Uganda the process was designed in such a fashion that a variety of organisations were drawn into the process of implementing and monitoring the country's major policy initiative, the Poverty Eradication Action Plan. The networks which are thus created are often fragile, and dependent on the continuing involvement of particular individuals or institutions. In the South Africa PPA process a considerable effort was placed in engaging officials from the government's flagship programme for tackling poverty and inequality issues, the Reconstruction and Development Programme. A restructuring of government institutions as the PPA was nearing its end disbanded the RDP – leaving a considerable gap at the key point in the PPA's network of relationships.[18]

■ *Stimulating processes of personal change in behaviour and attitudes of officials and policy makers through structured experiential learning.* Offering opportunities for officials to meet and discuss issues with poor men and women – in their communities – is a potential force for change which is difficult to quantify or assess. McGee argues that this has been underestimated in its potential power and influence.[19] The particular advantages of the PPA context, if well handled, are that the goal of enquiry provides a framework (if well facilitated) where individuals who are unaccustomed to listening carefully to ordinary people's views and experiences are more likely to openly engage.[20]

In conclusion, PPA processes can offer a number of different entry points for influencing processes of policy development. Sometimes things happen which were not planned at the beginning of the process (such as the decision in Zambia, following the original PPA, to integrate participatory approaches into the national poverty monitoring system). Awareness of the various channels of potential influence is important for those involved in the process in order to develop possible strategies both at the design stage, and during implementation.

2.6   Debates about PPAs – critiques and questions

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[17] Dogbe (1998), Milimo et al (1998).

[18] Attwood & May (1998)

[19] McGee, forthcoming (2000)

[20] The theme of using 'methodological' approaches for combating and subverting at an individual level 'normal professional' views of the world – which tend to exclude consideration of issues of power and oppression – has been extensively discussed in the work of Chambers (e.g. 1997).

The practice of participatory research for influencing policy has, as could be expected, generated a certain amount of debate. Much of this is constructive – and useful to practitioners in terms of being aware of certain kinds of hazards. Often the issues raised are the same ones that reflective practitioners discuss in other contexts. A short review of some of the major issues can help to highlight some areas of concern in designing and implementing a PPA process. Concerns can be grouped in the following areas:

2.6.1 The reliability of the information generated and the policy inferences drawn

The temptation is strong in participatory research to present information as the neutral, unmediated 'voice of the poor'. There are various kinds of factors (apart from the simple 'views' of participants) which can of course influence the process of generating findings. These include the views of the researchers and the interpretation of the informants of the researchers' agenda (are poor people just saying what the PPA teams appear to want to hear? Or seeking to derive advantage from perceived possible outcomes of the research?).[21] Participatory research practice does offer various means of controlling for and counter-acting potential biases, discussed in section 3. In terms of the presentation of material from PPAs, however, it is important to be transparent about the nature of material presented in PPAs. The reports produced are mediated representations of the realities, experiences, priorities and perceptions of poor people. The analysis contained is a result of interactions and relationships generated during the research process. It demonstrates the capacity of men and women from poor communities to participate in a process of policy analysis – but the way in which they are incorporated into that process (via the PPA) sets a context which invariably influences the results generated. In all of this PPAs are no different from other forms of inductive research, where the reliability and validity of the results depends on a professional approach which emphasises prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation and cross-checking as methodological tools for ensuring credibility.[22]

2.6.2 Ethical issues in participatory research for policy change

PPA processes face a number of well-documented ethical dilemmas. These relate primarily to the demands made on participants' time, and the dangers of raising expectations in participating communities. A further danger that is less documented, is that the discussions around issues of poverty will stir up divisions in the communities concerned with negative consequences if no long term process is in place to deal with the tensions created. The time demands of PPAs can be significant, especially if the research falls during a busy period in the local productive cycle. People who can often ill afford to divert their time from their livelihoods and domestic responsibilities are asked to participate in a process which can be justified for the 'greater good' – but is unlikely to bring them substantial direct benefits. Although PPA teams should be trained to ensure that no false impression is given that enquiries will lead to direct local assistance, this may not be sufficient to convince local people that nothing is on offer. Either not everybody hears the message – or assumptions are made that these denials conceal other possibilities. A variety of strategies have been adopted in PPAs to counter-act the dangers outlined above – the implications of these concerns for design and implementation are discussed in section 3.2.

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[21] See Moore et al (1998)

[22] Lincoln and Guba (1985), Pretty (1995), discuss criteria of quality and 'trustworthiness' for open-ended, participatory forms of enquiry.

2.6.3 Power and authority in the PPA process – the filtering of messages

Most PPAs nest within a policy process – providing influence, analysis and information – but not offering those who participate any form of direct decision-making control or authority. This has led to notable processes of 'filtering' of policy messages, which have been picked up by some observers.[23] This process may be particularly evident where the PPA is commissioned as a background paper for a Country Poverty Assessment carried out by the Bank – as a fairly straightforward textual analysis can show certain messages disappearing from view. From a practical perspective, however, it is important to recognise that all analytical processes involve this kind of selectivity from multiple sources – and no background paper prepared as part of a policy process could ever expect to see all of its policy messages translated directly into action. If a PPA process enters the arena of contested policy decisions, then it is likely that in the short term some arguments will be won and some lost. Given that the PPA simply presents one form of input to that process it is hard to see how it could be otherwise. The broader context will include other technocratic inputs – but also the influence of a political directorate that may or may not perceive its constituency as including different groups among the poor. Where PPAs seem to have the most influence, it arises from an approach where they become embedded in a policy process – changing assumptions about the nature and form of legitimate information, analysis and participation in policy formulation. These are longer-term processes of change – and difficult to measure by textual comparison.

Related to this, it is important not to make exaggerated claims for the participatory dimensions of policy research exercises. These have remained processes that are justified largely in terms of their outcomes – enabling policy processes to work better for the poor. They have rarely offered poor people the capacity to take control of decision-making processes. At their most effective they can be seen as widening the field of negotiation within which policy directions and goals are set.[24]

2.6.4 Ways forward – maintaining the integrity of the process

The following section of the guide will deal at more length with the ways in which processes can be designed to deal with the issues outlined above. But at the heart of any effective attempt to deal with some of the risks entailed are certain critical values – particularly a determination to be honest and transparent about the process and its limits with key stakeholders, and a determination to remain open and learn from experience (especially acknowledging mistakes).

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[23] Whitehead and Lockwood (1999) in particular point to the tendency for PPA messages concerning gender to fail to translate from PPAs to World Bank Country Poverty Assessment documents in a review of the Bank's poverty assessments in Africa. Robb (1999, p.63) identifies six different stages in the case study of the PPA in Zambia in which filters and biases can intervene between fieldwork and the identification of issues for policy change.

[24] Yates and Okello (2001) explore some of these issues in relation the Uganda PPA Process.

SECTION 3
A process guide – achieving policy change with PPAs

The objective of this section is to provide indicative guidance for the following questions. Will a PPA be useful? How should it be designed and carried out? As detailed process documentation is necessary to illustrate these issues, the section draws heavily on the two case studies presented in section 4.

3.1   Will a PPA be useful?

A participatory poverty assessment can fulfil many different purposes, and in many different ways. Many of the outcomes of PPAs that have been documented could not have been predicted at the outset of the exercise. PPAs as defined here are particularly useful (if well carried out) for the following purposes:

- Broadening coalitions supporting poverty reduction actions

- Questioning received wisdom about what poverty is and what actions best address the challenge of tackling deprivation

- Stimulating debate about the key issues for poverty reduction – whether among technocrats or in public arenas.

- Facilitating personal and institutional change for those who get involved.

Outcomes of effective PPAs may include:

- More effective identification of priority actions for poverty reduction

- More powerful and committed coalitions linking different parts of government, civil society and donors behind poverty reduction goals

- More effective systems for learning and feedback on the outcomes of policies and programmes

Conditions suggesting that the idea of carrying out a PPA may be worth pursuing include the following:

- If a poverty reduction strategy is being developed, and key actors in government or the donor community are aware of the need to broaden the institutional and informational base for developing and implementing the strategy.

- If there is a demand on the part of key individuals and institutions to understand better the nature of poverty and the outcomes of policies and programmes aimed at reducing it – and a willingness to recognise the value of engaging with the experience and knowledge of poor people directly to do this.

- If key agencies in civil society that might engage in a PPA are seeking to engage in policy dialogue and advocacy with government and/or donor institutions.

With the new approach embodied in the HIPC2 initiative, where countries prepare Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers as an overall framework governing public policy and the relation with donor agencies, the conditions outlined above are increasingly likely to prevail in countries which receive concessional lending or debt relief. An over-emphasis on 'pre-conditions' for a PPA process would be misplaced however. As PPAs follow no blueprint, then the factors that

offer a fruitful context cannot be uniformly identified either. Under conditions where government is not effectively focusing policy on poverty issues, it may still be useful for a coalition to embark on a PPA in order to stimulate dialogue that might focus attention on the issue of poverty in government. Even under the most apparently unpromising circumstances, it may be worthwhile for committed organisations outside government (donors, civil society) to consider engaging in exercises which present a bottom up perspective on issues of deprivation and what public policy should be doing to help the poor and excluded. The outcomes of this kind of initiative are difficult to predict, and highlighting such experiences may lead to unexpected outcomes.

The process of assessing the potential value of a PPA will involve talking to potential stakeholders, and seeking to develop a viable coalition that is capable of identifying a common purpose. How far an organisation or individual should seek to act as a 'catalyst' in this is a difficult question of judgement. The capacity to articulate a vision of change (political, institutional, personal) will often be necessary to engage a coalition behind a PPA. If a donor agency finds that it is 'forcing the issue' persistently without the development of momentum among a broader group of actors in the country concerned, then it may mean that either the approach needs to be re-thought, or that the time and conditions are not right.

3.2   Assessing the policy and institutional context

As outlined above, the starting point in a PPA process generally involves a concern to broaden the information base and constituency of support for poverty reduction policies and strategies. The catalyst is usually the existence of a political or bureaucratic imperative to develop public policy on the issue of poverty – on the part of government or other actors (e.g. donors). In the case of Uganda, the political commitment that provided the umbrella for the PPA derived primarily from government (see section 4.1), in the form of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan. The PPA was seen explicitly as a means of extending consultation in the process of developing the PEAP to poor people themselves. In the case of Vietnam (4.2) the donor community played a strong role in encouraging the government to draw together a variety of programmes under a more unified framework for poverty reduction. The PPA was one of the processes by which links were developed with government which enabled a stronger dialogue to develop. Over time more actors become involved in developing the structure and content of the PPA (NGOs, researchers, local governments etc.).

For people interested in exploring the possibility of developing a PPA process, the starting point is to assess the policy and institutional context, prior to commencing a design process. Aside from the baseline question addressed in the previous section (whether a PPA is likely to be worthwhile) further objectives include specifying the most useful roles a PPA can play, and seeking a primary institutional 'home' for the process. The following questions provide a guide for this assessment.

Where in government is there a commitment to developing poverty reduction policies, strategies and programmes – and who has the incentive to pursue this?

The most significant long-term outcomes of PPAs have been in building new relationships around the policy process. A point of leadership in the process is necessary. In a PPA aimed at strengthening national policy this leadership ideally comes from within Government. If commitment to a poverty strategy is fairly broad-based within central government then there may be a number of options for the central institutional location. In other cases those charged with taking forward a poverty strategy may be fewer, and more isolated from mainstream power and authority.

In addition to assessing the degree of commitment to policy goals of poverty reduction it is also worth considering how the language of poverty and deprivation is understood by different

actors – and how this affects what policies are seen as relevant to poverty reduction. A conception of poverty reduction as an issue which has cross-cutting relevance to all aspects of a country's policy framework (more or less the situation described by Bird and Kakande for Uganda in section 4.1) cannot be taken for granted. In the Vietnam case, for example, the 'poverty policies' of government were largely seen as being encapsulated in a single programme of targeted welfare transfers.[25] In assessing how poverty is viewed and conceptualised in public discourse it is important to look beyond formal documents of governments, NGOs and donor agencies. How, for example, are issues of poverty reduction and equity portrayed in the media? What tend to be presented as the key issues (access to credit, healthcare, security, and so on)?

In some cases the commitment to pursuing social justice in a country context may be framed in a different language from that of 'poverty reduction' (for example realising human rights). Framing a process of participation and consultation similar to a PPA according to a different language is worth considering if the resonance may be enhanced.

The development of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers as an instrument which should guide future concessional loans and debt relief in poorer countries is a significant process which may create incentives for governments to engage with a broader range of stakeholders internally than has previously been the case. While these exercises should in theory be 'country owned' – and the existing guidance strongly stresses the need for a participatory approach to their development – their implications for the future context of PPAs are not yet clear. As many commentators have noted, shifting to a rhetoric of 'country ownership' does not automatically nullify the great power that donors hold over the design of macro policy, and the context for PRSPs remains laden with the baggage of World Bank/IMF conditionality.[26] It is likely that one of the outcomes of the introduction of the PRSP instrument will be an emphasis on implementing PPAs that are integrated into mainstream governance and planning processes. Care will be needed to ensure that the climate allows the appropriate space within policy and institutional processes for an effective initiative.

What are the key policy processes, who is involved and who controls and influences them?

In the Uganda case, the placement of the PPA process within the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning created fertile ground for active and significant links to policy processes to emerge as the PPA developed. For example, PPA findings influenced the development of 'poverty criteria' used to assess proposals put to the Ministry for the investment budget. One of the features of Uganda's approach to implementing its poverty eradication strategy is the close links between the implementation of the strategy and the allocation of resources through the national public budget. It may not always be possible to achieve a linkage of this kind. In the Vietnam case – where the governmental approach to poverty policy was formally still wedded to a 'safety net' programme of relatively narrow scope – the leadership of the PPA from the donor community provided an effective point of departure. Civil society partners were willing to participate because of the promise of engaging with policy change in significant donor agencies – with a likely knock-on effect of broadening the dialogue on poverty reduction with government agencies at the central and local level.

In mapping out the ways in which a PPA process might influence policy, the following typology of policy change offered in box 2 might be useful.

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[25] Vietnam does, nevertheless, have a strong record on poverty reduction in practice. Commitment to social justice can be seen in the record of land redistribution. This illustrates that effective poverty reduction action does can take many forms, and key policies may be described in other terms that those labelled 'poverty reduction'.

[26] McGee with Norton (2000)

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Box 2   A typology of policy change

In mapping potential opportunities for policy change, a sense of the component areas where a PPA process might contribute is important. The broad typology below is one way of structuring this.

1. Influencing *the allocation of resources* – between: different sectors, activities within sectors, distribution of benefits through regional, poverty or other targeting. Within government structures the predominant mechanism determining this is the budget process.

2. Influencing *the way in which services are delivered to enhance their access, relevance and quality for poor people.* This interacts with the budget process – but also involves elements that are micro-level and concern the ways in which service providers interact at local level with communities and clients. A common finding in PPAs, for example, has been that a major factor impeding poor people's access to public services is the relatively hostile reception they experience from providers. Access to services related to justice and security is also frequently raised as a major issue in PPAs.

3. Influencing *regulatory frameworks which affect poor people's livelihoods* – particularly those which mediate the conditions of tenure and access to key assets, such as land and housing.

4. Influencing *processes of governance* – the accountability, transparency and accessibility of decision-making processes at local and national levels.

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Once key policy processes and actors have been identified, it is also important to gain a sense of the cycles and timing that apply to them. The following may be important:

- *Political cycles* – In a case where a national poverty reduction strategy is being led effectively by the political directorate of a country, the way in which key processes such as the electoral cycle influence the development of motivations will be important. Major policy initiatives tend to happen in the early through to middle stages of a particular political administration.

- *Planning and budget cycles* – What are the key points in the annual planning process – and how does this link to the allocation of resources through the budget? The effectiveness with which planning processes at national or local level actually determine budget allocations – and the degree to which theoretical allocation determines what really gets spent vary greatly between (and even within) different countries. Where planning and budget processes are effectively co-ordinated the possibilities for any policy process to produce effective results

  on the ground (not just PPAs) are enhanced. There is no absolute guidance on the best point to generate PPA results for these to influence an annual budget cycle. It would depend in practice on the form in which the results are processed and the intermediary stages through which their policy relevance is considered (which may include the production of an overall poverty assessment using both quantitative and qualitative material). The key point is for the team managing the PPA to map out the relevant processes, and engage with the most influential stakeholders – so they are aware of the work which is ongoing and the kinds of results it might produce. In practice, most material from PPAs does not date significantly within a period of a year or so – so annual policy and budget cycles are more significant for strategies of dissemination of results than for the timing of fieldwork and analysis.

- *Information and monitoring cycles* – It might be expected that cycles of gathering and analysing information on the nature and distribution of poverty – and the effectiveness of policies designed to reduce it – might run in step with planning and budget cycles, but this is not always the case. It is helpful to map out what the major exercises are which contribute to the assessment of trends in poverty and wellbeing (for example national quantitative poverty surveys), what their timing is and what opportunities they raise. If the major motivation for a PPA is contributing to the national poverty monitoring system, then the cycle of national quantitative surveys becomes a significant factor. Some opportunities for developing synergies between the two (for example using PPA results to help focus the questionnaire) impose demands on the timing of the work.

- *Approval cycles for donor assistance* – what are the key planning and policy processes related to donor assistance, and how significant are they in relation to the influence on public policy – and the impact on poor people's livelihoods? The introduction of the instrument of the

Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper implies that large amounts of donor assistance to poorer countries will be co-ordinated through a three-year cycle which is largely driven by bureaucratic processes in the two most powerful IFIs (the World Bank and the IMF). In countries that are relatively highly aid-dependent these cycles will be significant – and may become the driving force behind the development of poverty strategy. PPAs may be proposed as a means of monitoring the implementation of PRSPs.

Mapping the various cycles outlined above is a useful exercise in thinking through the environment in which a PPA process might develop. Clearly the above cycles all have political content – not just the first. It is also evident that the cycles will, in practice, interact. Donors are concerned that emerging 'PRSPs' should be nationally owned and led – but there are potential contradictions.[27] PPAs are often advocated by donors in part through a concern that policy dialogue is broadened to take on more actors within and outside government. In effect a PPA may be advocated as one of a range of strategies to help develop linkages between the processes of donors, civil society and the government.[28]

Many of the cycles outlined above will be replicated at different levels (District, regional, national) and within different sections of government. Clearly a PPA process would need to reflect the existing and planned directions of change – as well as the existing structural 'maps'. Budget processes, for example, will take place at State and District level within a large federal country as well as at national level. Sector ministries play distinctive roles in the budget process – and the key decisions that influence the benefits flowing to poor communities may occur within sector structures (including local facilities such as clinics). Thinking through the nature of the policy process – and in particular where the capacity for determining outcomes that matter for the poor is located – is critical for structuring the PPA process.

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[27] See McGee with Norton (2000) for a discussion of this

[28] McGee with Norton (2000), Edgerton et al (2000), discuss PPAs within the context of other ways of strengthening participation in PRSPs

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Box 3 Assessing the policy and institutional context – summary checklist

Assessing the policy and institutional context is critical to determining whether a PPA is worth pursuing, and if so how a coalition can be built to carry it out. If possible a central location is needed to anchor the PPA within meaningful policy processes, under the watch of committed, influential champions. An assessment needs to address the following:

1. Who are the key actors (in government, civil and political society) and which are the key institutions engaged in different stages of developing and implementing poverty reduction policy? If a national poverty reduction strategy is being developed key stages to consider include:

   ■ the *diagnosis* of the extent and nature of poverty, its distribution, causes and the priority actions which will effectively reduce it

   ■ the *formulation* of the strategy – including identification of roles, responsibilities, entitlements & rights

   ■ the *approval* of the strategy and its follow-up actions – both globally and through decentralised systems down to local levels

   ■ the *implementation* of the strategy, including continual monitoring of outcomes of actions which are identified.

2. Which of these actors is expressing demand for information about the distribution and causes of poverty?

3. What are the key mechanisms whereby policy change is translated into action and outcomes? These may include processes of resource allocation (budgets), formulation and implementation of legislation and regulation.

4. What are the key cycles which determine or influence the pace and pattern of policy change, and how do they affect it? These may include political (electoral) cycles, budgetary cycles, cycles related to donor policy (country strategies), cycles of policy dialogue (e.g. debt relief), and cycles of information gathering and analysis.

3.3   Designing the process

3.3.1 Addressing the Basics

The bulk of this section shares experience from PPAs on key learning points for effective development of a PPA process. Before proceeding to that, we will briefly outline the key elements of the design process that will need to be addressed. Many of these will be tackled again in section 3.4 (enhancing quality). Issues such as training, and methodology, are not simply issues for upfront design, but need to be continually addressed through implementation. It is assumed in the following that the key starting elements of the PPA (institutional location, and the primary intended channels for policy influence) have been identified.

Table 2   Basic Elements of PPA Design

Task	Options, criteria for choice & related issues
Selecting Technical Assistance	TA may be needed in a number of different fields and with a variety of experience and skills. Specialist inputs are likely to be needed in training in particular. TA at the design phase should be able to draw on experience of policy research (including other PPAs) – and may or may not continue to follow the process. Once the PPA is up and running and the implementation team has been established, further external TA needs to be responsive and consistent. Regular switching between different individuals is likely to be disruptive. It is particularly helpful if a lead researcher takes responsibility for the process from fieldwork design through to writing up and analysis – experience of the handling of analysis and synthesis of qualitative or participatory fieldwork will be helpful.
Identifying implementation partners	Institutions are needed which will fulfil a variety of functions within a PPA – including financing, policy influence and analysis, technical skills in design and analysis, training, dissemination and logistics and field management (see Table 4 for further material). Partner institutions for implementation tend to fall into four main categories: central government; local government; NGOs (international, national, local); research-based or academic. Some factors to consider in developing the implementation structure: ■ Is a multi-level structure needed that can respond to local as well as national policy needs? *If so* involvement of local government staff may be a priority. ■ What are the best options for the long-term development of capacity? From this perspective use of national institutions may be advisable, even if they initially lack experience.
Identifying objectives and the research agenda	Prior to the development of a detailed plan for carrying out field research, it will be necessary to get consensus of the partner institutions on the fundamental objectives of the exercise – and the basic elements to be pursued in the research. Involving all partners in this is critical for long-term commitment to the exercise.
Identifying members for field teams	In many PPAs the membership of the field teams is drawn from personnel of key partner institutions (local government, central government statistical and policy units, NGOs, research institutions, donors). In some instances (e.g. Zambia) they were independent freelancers organised in a loose network by a co-ordinating institution (in this case the University of Zambia). ■ A potential benefit of using independent researchers is their availability for longer periods of time, including follow up studies (which may not be the case with institutional personnel).[29] ■ The benefits of using institutional staff may include: access to the policy process; building broader commitment to the PPA process; stimulating processes of personal and institutional change in key locations.
Identifying sources of financial support	These have included donors, governments, participating NGOs in different instances. Some financial support from government is a useful indicator of buy-in to the process and thereby likely use of the outcomes. Experience shows that *flexibility* of support, and a long-term perspective, is important in allowing the PPA time to develop the relationships and experience necessary to produce outcomes.

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[29] In the Zambia case the network formed themselves into an NGO (the Participatory Assessment Group) to continue to carry out participatory policy research.

Table 2   cont'd

Task	Options, criteria for choice & related issues
Selecting field research sites and participants	The technical aspects of this are covered in more detail in section 3.3. Some brief pointers for practice are provided here. The selection of sites for field investigation, and the identification of research participants is one of the more difficult issues in PPAs. The two more common approaches involve either: 1) pure purposive sampling – the selection of research sites to fit with identified criteria (different livelihood and social groupings, urban/rural, access to services & infrastructure, etc.) 2) the use of statistical data to provide a framework for random sample selection guided by certain criteria (e.g. level of consumption poverty). Some key factors to be aware of are the following: ■ What is the objective of the sampling and site selection process? An exercise which is directed at looking at the *causes* of deprivation should seek to focus on establishing appropriate disaggregations by livelihood and social group to allow the influence of key factors to be traced. ■ Will the sampling framework and approach produce a logistically manageable number and distribution of fieldwork sites? If there are areas of the country which are unreachable due to civil conflict or other reasons, how will this be handled? ■ Does the approach to sampling fit with the field methodology? (e.g. household based selection is inappropriate for group based participatory research methods) ■ Are there policy considerations which will influence selection? (e.g. a focus on certain districts' policy process and capacity will limit geographical coverage) ■ What are the analytical implications of the sample selection? (large amounts of qualitative data place great challenges for analysis) ■ How does the sample affect the perceived credibility (both political and technical) of the work?
Developing a methodology for research, synthesis and analysis	Many countries in which PPAs are likely to take place have communities of practitioners who have familiarity with methods of participatory enquiry such as PLA/PRA, or participatory action research. This could be expected to be the case in most of South Asia, Africa and Latin America. In Eastern Europe this would generally not be the case.[30] Building on methods which are practised and known in the country is usually advisable, if this is possible. Issues which should be addressed at the design stage include: What kind of conceptual framework will help to guide the research – without restricting the ability to generate new issues and agendas on the basis of the fieldwork? Participatory research is generally open-ended and flexible – but various PPAs have made use of particular frameworks for organising enquiry and analysis. The PPA in Mongolia has made extensive use of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach in order to analyse the dynamic components of poverty in that context.[31] Moser and Holland's work on violence and poverty in Jamaica is built on a framework for analysis of vulnerability and the assets poor people deploy to guard against risks.[32] Other relevant theoretical insights may come from the analysis of social exclusion or, simply, power. There is not space here to review all of this experience – but these issues should be considered. To what extent should the approach be standardised? The use of semi-structured guidance to interviewing or carrying out PLA group analysis exercises significantly aids any form of synthesis and analysis of large amounts of documentation of participatory or qualitative enquiry.[33] Again, there is a risk that thematic areas outside of the guidance may not be picked up – the trade-off between these two concerns and the appropriate balance has to be judged on the basis of context. It is critical to develop a clear plan for documenting the research findings and process at all stages. Synthesis will be much easier if this is well handled.

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[30] Although field teams were trained in participatory research into poverty issues in some East European countries as part of the Consultations with the Poor exercise. See Narayan et al (2000)

[31] The PPA in Mongolia is in process of finalisation, and the report is available in draft. The Sustainable Livelihoods approach is described in DFID (2000), Ashley and Carney (2000) and Scoones (1999).

[32] See Moser and Holland (1997)

[33] The *Methodololgy Guide* to the 23 country exercise summarised in Narayan et al (2000, annex 3) is a useful example of this.

To illustrate how these elements might translate into a schematic 'plan' for a PPA, two examples are given below. A more detailed account is given of the decision-making process in developing a PPA design in the two case studies in section 4.

Table 3   Two examples of PPA costs and plans

Features	Mongolia	The Gambia
Cost	$108,100 (excluding World Bank staff weeks)	$134,000 (cost of total project which includes 5 PPA studies over a three year period)
Number of communities selected for research	32 rural and urban communities	29 rural and urban communities
Time spent on training	2 weeks (March 2000). Provided by international consultant.	5 days. Provided by Action Aid The Gambia.
Time spent on field research	2 months (March – May 2000)	One month (August, 1999)
Time spent in each community	1 week	5 days in rural communities 6 days in urban communities
Time spent on analysis	4 months	3 months
Size of research team	4 teams of 4 members	7 teams 4 members
Composition of research team	Nationals with men and women equally represented; ability to speak local languages.	Nationals with men and women equally represented; ability to speak local languages.
Agency conducting the field work	Staff of the Social Statistic Division, National Statistics Office, Government of Mongolia; Centre for Social Development (local consulting firm); UNICEF seconded staff.	Action Aid The Gambia; government extension workers and consultants.
Donors who contributed to the PPAs	World Bank, Asian Development Bank, DFID	International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada.

Source: Robb (2001 forthcoming) Can the Poor Influence Policy 2nd Edition

A point to note is that in both of the above cases the emphasis was on the PPA as an ongoing information-based exercise. Introducing other objectives – such as enabling local government structures to develop the capacity for participatory planning might require a more complex planning framework that in the cases illustrated above.

3.3.2 Learning from experience

There is no blueprint for the design process of PPAs – any more than for the implementation. The following section is built around a series of key messages – which are arranged in a rough logical sequence.

Gear the timing of the design process to building ownership and commitment in the key partners

The most valuable asset of a PPA process in its early stages is the commitment and enthusiasm of the key partners within the country. As with any exercise directed at influencing policy, there are likely to be considerable advantages in adopting a flexible approach to timing – bearing this in mind. The Vietnam case, where it took a year to get all of the various component parts of the PPA partnership in place illustrates *the importance of taking time to allow for the commitment of key stakeholders to strengthen.* In Uganda, by contrast, the sense of ownership and leadership from

government was palpable right from the start – and if anything it was pressure to bring results rapidly into the policy arena from the government which drove the pace of the process. Policy and institutional environments are not stable, however, and an over-reliance on one set of key contacts can make the process vulnerable.[34]

Set clear objectives – and establish a flexible structure for supporting the process

There is often a limit to how far it is possible to go in determining the structure of partnership which will support a PPA before establishing the structure for providing resources. In the Uganda PPA Process one of the key elements in establishing the space for the links to policy to develop was the decision to establish UPPAP as a three year 'project' with its own planning framework. Both of the case studies in section 4 place a considerable emphasis on the fact that the framework for providing resources was flexible and supportive as a key element in ensuring success. In the case of the UPPAP it was particularly important that the project purpose – and the identified outputs – were geared to support medium-term goals of strengthening policy development in Uganda. A one-off field research exercise would have been very unlikely to achieve the kinds of links that have been established through the process. In the Vietnam case there were also longer-term elements to the structure of support for the PPAs – such as the fact that the key individual providing dedicated technical support was engaged on a long-term contract.

Establish strong partnerships for implementation

Different partners within a PPA bring different skills and qualities to the process. PPA processes have tended to involve the following mix of skills and capabilities – met by particular stakeholders.

Table 4   Institutional Roles

Functions and Skills	*Type of Institution*
Financing the PPA	Donors (whole or part), Central Governments (part funding), sometimes civil society organisations (part funding, typically of segments of the PPA)
Policy change – access to the policy process	Central Governments, Local Governments, Donors (for their own strategies, and for the influence on govt frameworks), development NGOs (e.g. used of findings by Vietnam partners)
Provision of technical design skills	Research institutions (international or national), donor agencies
Provision of training in participatory research methods, and methods for analysis	Development NGOs (international, national or other southern national)[35]
Dissemination of results and advocacy for policy influence	National NGOs, national and local media
Social analysis – especially for synthesis of fieldwork results	Academic researchers – usually from national research institutions, research/advocacy NGOs
Logistics and field management	Generally national NGOs, sometimes international NGOs, or national research institutions

Some points are worth highlighting from the above.

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[34] Atwood and May (1998) describe how much careful building of ownership within the South African government was compromised when the key partner institution disappeared during a restructucturing

[35] Dogbe argues that the use of Indian trainers in the Ghana PPA (Meera Shah and Neela Mukherjee) had a strong symbolic impact – in persuading the Ghanaians that they would be able to carry out the PPA and engage with policy makers in a meaningful way. They gained confidence from seeing 'fellow southerners' in that role, rather than specialists from the North. (Dogbe 1998)

- *The benefits of an effective governance structure for the PPA.* A PPA can benefit enormously from having a governance structure which brings together some of the key actors. In Uganda this was provided as part of the structure of the project design by the UPPAP Management Committee, while in Vietnam the mechanism of the Poverty Working Group played a major role in strengthening government ownership of the process. An inclusive structure is important in providing voice to various actors involved (governmental and non-governmental) in determining the approach to some of the more difficult issues, where there may be trade-offs. The trade-off between having good access to the policy process, for example, as against assuring that the processing of the findings is independent. The former priority suggests the need for close integration with government policy development mechanisms – the latter suggests that credibility of the results in the wider public debate may be compromised if government has too much involvement. Decision-making on a potentially sensitive issue of this kind should involve representatives of both the governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in the project.

- *The importance of involving experienced social researchers.* The use of rapid investigatory techniques to address complex issues, such as the nature of disadvantage, and the operation of structures of power and oppression, does have risks. Research in group contexts (as with much PRA) can lead to a tendency for the participants to gloss over division and present a unified 'community' front to the investigators.[36] Some of the hardest tasks – such as making sure that the poorest and most marginalised have been identified and included in the research – are very difficult to assure without considerable prior knowledge. In Zambia, Ghana and South Africa, therefore, efforts were made to include in the research teams highly experienced social researchers with an interest in poverty analysis. To include within the process some researchers who are familiar with the task of synthesis and analysis of qualitative research material is also valuable. Social researchers involved in PPAs should be open to working in teams including non-specialists, to working with participatory values and methods, and have an interest in applied policy work.

- *Access to policy processes.* Experience suggests that the institutional location of the PPA and the human relationships thereby developed can be very significant in ensuring an appropriate integration of the findings into policy-making. If the results of the PPA are constantly in decision-makers' minds, through regular interactions between actors in the policy and budget process, then it is much more likely that technical means will be found to incorporate the results into such processes. The five themes developed in Uganda for enhancing poverty impact in the budget process (box 4) are evidence-based (drawing on both quantitative and PPA results) pragmatic, and appropriate to application in reviewing budget proposals received by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning from other agencies. This reflects the fact that the membership of the Poverty Working Group is familiar both with evidence on poverty from a variety of sources, and with the workings of government policy processes. It may not be possible in many situations to achieve this level of integration of a PPA into policy processes. The basic learning point, however, remains valid, which is that the selection of partners is a key means for enhancing the capacity of the exercise to promote policy change.

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[36] See Mosse (1995).

Box 4   Budgeting for Poverty Reduction in Uganda

For the 2000 budget process in Uganda, five themes were identified by the Poverty Working Group, stemming from quantitative and participatory analysis. Line ministries submitting budget proposals are expected to show how these themes are addressed in their proposed programme:

■   Benefiting the poorest 20 per cent of Uganda's population

■   Addressing the specific concerns of women

■   Improving information available to all Ugandans regarding government policies, programmes and budgetary allocations

■   Addressing inequalities between regions in access to services and opportunities

■   Tackling poverty issues that require a cross-sectoral, integrated policy response, such as child nutrition

Work with key stakeholders to establish the thematic focus of the PPA

The two case study examples provide examples of approaches to establishing the thematic focus for the PPA fieldwork. The key point is to establish what those who may be able to apply the findings to policy see as priority needs in terms of information. In practice this also helps to focus the research agenda and make the scope of the research more manageable. There may be a trade-off to be confronted between the aim of keeping the research agenda open, and capable of reflecting the diversity of results coming from the local level – and establishing linkages to the perceived needs of policy makers for certain kinds of information. There is no magic formula for managing this trade-off. On the whole most teams which have approached the PPA on the more 'open-ended' side of this balance have experienced difficulties in focusing and processing the results. A more deterministic approach, however, may lead to a loss of potential richness in the results, and also on occasion, difficulties of translation of concepts under investigation. Whatever the approach adopted – it is important to have consulted key stakeholders on the policy side in order to engage them in the process, and give a sense of ownership which is likely to enhance the impact of the results.

Allow space for a process with integrity at the community level – respect, follow-up and feedback for participants

Section 2.6 above highlighted the key ethical issues in carrying out participatory research for policy change and briefly highlighted some of the possible responses. To recap, these relate primarily to the demands made on participants' time, and the dangers of raising expectations in participating communities. A variety of strategies have been adopted in PPAs to counter-act these danger, including the following:

■   *Only engaging in communities where a follow-up capacity exists* to facilitate further action (in the Ghana PPA this principle was adopted for the third phase as an outcome of the researchers feelings of discomfort with the process in the first and second rounds of fieldwork). The *advantage* of this approach is that if the structures are effective it means that the participants can experience a long-term developmental process of direct benefit. The potential *drawbacks* are that, firstly, the application of this criterion to site selection may bias the sample. In the Ghana case cited it was noted that the selection of rural communities with active NGO projects meant that none of the sites selected in this round had major difficulties with safe domestic water supplies – which affects other findings in the PPA. [37] Secondly, it cannot be guaranteed that the follow-up capacity will necessarily be effective. Where PPA exercises involve local governments it is theoretically easier to offer the potential for follow-up systemically, and without influencing the selection of sample communities.

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[37] Korboe et al (1995)

- *Incorporating into the research process a 'community action planning' component* which allows for the teams to facilitate the development of local level action arising from the PPA process – this may or may not be funded through the PPA budget. The *advantage* of this approach is that an element of direct action at the local level is incorporated structurally into the PPA process. The potential *drawbacks* are the following: 1). Managing the provision of support to communities (especially small amounts of financial support) greatly increases the logistical and management demands on the PPA process – to ensure accountability; 2). Incorporating elements of direct support make the PPA process as a whole vulnerable to certain kinds of thematic distortion – it introduces incentives to participants to emphasise localised issues capable of resolution through 'community development' solutions (rather than broader issues, such as the accountability of public services), and it introduces an incentive for groups to compete for influence over the PPA findings.

- *'Rewarding' participation*, either directly to individuals, or via some form of gift at the level of a collective group. Most PPA teams engage in some forms of reciprocal relationships with communities. An appropriate level of reciprocity in terms of local idioms (sharing food, gifts to community leaders) is likely to form an integral part of the 'etiquette' of relationships at the local level. To make some allowance for this in the handling of the project budget is sensible. Teams can discuss strategies for assuring that such processes are as equitable as possible. A common dilemma is that a gift to the 'community' (such as educational materials for the school) may not benefit the poorest. On the whole, individual payment is to be avoided as a systemic practice because of the obvious potential for distorting findings. This is an area, however, where a pragmatic approach is called for, with flexible support for field teams who, in the end, have to use their best judgement on this issue.

- *Emphasising carefully and regularly the limits of the exercise.* This entails being aware that transparency does not mean just negotiating access with community leaders and officials but ensuring that all participants have a chance to discuss and understand the context of the PPA and the purposes for which they are giving up their time.

- *Structuring the research process so that activities take place at the best time for participants – and intrusion at key points in the daily or annual cycles of domestic and productive labour are avoided.* The process of negotiating the terms of the relationship with the participants early in the fieldwork should include discussion of issues of timing and disturbance. The long-term planning of a PPA should, as far as possible, seek to avoid periods of maximum labour demand in rural communities.

- *Ensuring that the groups that participate in the PPA remain engaged in the process through feedback on the results of the research at local, regional and national levels.* The form of involvement can be weak (reporting back) or strong (e.g. inviting participants to regional or national meetings to discuss results and conclusions). The appropriate form of feedback will vary – communities with high levels of literacy may be able to make use of site reports, for example, for advocacy with officials, politicians or service providers. In most cases it will be necessary to revisit the participating community, to present what have been developed as key findings, and get feedback from participants on the appropriateness of the key messages which have been synthesised from the fieldwork.

Ultimately there are no universal answers to dealing with these issues. Some balance of the strategies outlined above has been used in most PPAs – but often applied in an ad hoc manner in the field, by teams feeling unsure and unguided on the overall approach. The design and training phases of a PPA should deal with these issues carefully. From the perspective of the design of the PPA process, the important point to note is that flexible structures are needed to manage and resource many of these strategies. An adequate provision to do a single round of fieldwork and produce a report will not allow for teams to revisit the field sites to report back and discuss findings. Allowing a flexible budget provision for follow-up is good practice.

Box 5 Designing the process – summary checklist

A set of fundamental tasks need to be addressed in designing a PPA process, which comprise the following:

- Identifying the central institutional location for the PPA (seeking *commitment, access to policy information and influence*)

- Finding technical assistance (seeking *experience, flexibility, capacity to deal with different areas and functions – training, analysis, etc.*)

- Identifying implementation partners for different functions (*financing, policy influence, design and analysis, training, dissemination, logistics, field management* etc.)

- Agreeing objectives and research agenda (seeking *shared commitment among key partners, clarity, manageable scope*)

- Identifying members for field teams (according to agreed criteria, which may include *openness to change in values/attitudes, flexible availability for follow-up, expertise and experience, understanding and access to policy debates, area/linguistic/cultural familiarity*)

- Identifying sources of financial support (seeking *flexibility, long-term commitment*)

- Selecting field research sites and participants – geared to representing the social and livelihood conditions in poor communities in the country/state/province (seeking *credibility for results, a manageable scale for fieldwork, appropriate disaggregation to investigate causal links, enhanced value for policy analysis*)

- Developing an integrated methodology for field research, synthesis of findings and policy analysis using results (seeking *an appropriate balance between standardisation and flexibility for the goals of the PPA; a guiding conceptual approach; methods which allow for comparison, aggregation and synthesis of diverse materials*).

- An implementation plan for fieldwork (which allows *space for reflection, sharing of experiences, recording, reporting and analysis*)

Key lessons from the experience and practice of PPAs are:

- Gear the timing of the design process to building ownership and commitment in key partners

- Set clear objectives – and establish a flexible structure for support

- Work with key stakeholders to establish the thematic focus for the PPA

- Establish space for a process with integrity at the community level – respect, follow-up and feedback for participants

3.4 Enhancing quality

The following section addresses a selected range of key issues for ensuring quality in the field investigations and generation of results of a PPA.

3.4.1 Training

Evidence from all reviews of national and international PPA processes suggests that high quality training is essential to achieving good results in a PPA process.[38] The training style should be open-ended, make use of the existing experience in the group, and in some key areas (e.g.

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[38] See, for example Robb, (1999).

guidelines for team working, introducing the research to participants) should aim to facilitate an agreed approach among the group rather than follow a pre-set blueprint. The training should encompass the following elements:

■ Thematic focus of the PPA;

■ Basic research methods and approach that will be used, including the approach to sampling;

■ Teamwork guidelines and team roles;

■ The approach to explaining the PPA to potential participants and other local level stakeholders (e.g. officials);

■ Managing relationships at the community level with participants in the research (including an agreed approach to the ethical dilemmas outlined above);

■ Recording, reporting and analysis.

Consideration should be given to:

■ Including the field testing of the methodology within the scope of the training exercise. This should also include trying out systems for recording, reporting and basic synthesis of the findings. Fieldwork can involve a 'dry run' for some of the conditions which will be encountered in the field – staying in communities, urban as well as rural communities for field testing of methods.

■ Producing a basic field guide to carrying out the research as an output of the training workshop(s).

■ Including space within the training schedule for some particular design tasks – for example, developing an approach to site selection, finalising team roles and logistical arrangements.

The single task which is most frequently under-estimated at the design stage (in terms of how lengthy and difficult it is likely to prove) is that of carrying out the first basic synthesis of the PPA results. This is dealt with under section 3.3.4 below – but it is worth stating now that training in these areas (recording, reporting, synthesis and analysis) is important.

3.4.2 Methods for fieldwork

A wide range of methods have been developed for carrying out participatory research. The most common appellations have been those of Participatory Rural Appraisal (or PRA) and Participatory Learning and Action (which evolved from PRA). Other 'schools' have been known under terms such as Participatory Action Research and (particularly in the World Bank) Beneficiary Assessment. All of these 'schools' comprise much more than simply a collection of methods or techniques. There is not the space or the need here to go into detail on specific field methods, or the broader philosophical underpinnings. For those wishing to follow up on these issues in detail the Participation Group at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, UK, is the recommended first point of contact. [39]

In practice most policy research exercises of the PPA type use a range of research methods, many of which are familiar from conventional approaches to contextual, qualitative approaches to investigation:

■ Gathering of existing secondary information for context, background and triangulation of findings

■ Unstructured and semi-structured interviewing of individuals and groups

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[39] To contact by email: participation@ids.ac.uk. The website is at www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip. This group publishes a number of information packs, including one on PPAs (2000) The PRA Tools and Techniques pack (1996) has some basic references and guidance. More recently see at www.care.org October 1999 part 3 of *Embracing Participation in Development: Wisdom from the Field – Worldwide Experience from Care's Reproductive Health Programme*. This comprises a clear guide to a range of participatory tools and techniques by Meera Shah.

- Facilitated thematic group discussions

- Direct observation

- Case studies and biographies

- Structured, task based analytical exercises – carried out by research participants individually or, more commonly, in groups, and illustrating their *priorities, judgements, understandings, analysis* or *experiences.*

The last of the above list describes a series of methods that have been developed within the PLA tradition. Mostly, this approach has been concerned with facilitating the process of participants arriving at proposals for collective action as a result of group based processes of reflection and analysis. Most PPA reports contain examples of the use of the particular methods listed in table 5. There is a strong emphasis in many (but not all) of these methods on visual representation of information and analytical relationships – to facilitate collective deliberation.

Table 5 Some PPA methods – context and applications

Method	Description, use, context
Preference ranking or scoring	Involves the ranking or scoring of people's priorities, problems or preferences – often disaggregated by different criteria. For example, how do people rate different health providers according to effectiveness, cost, accessibility etc.? Disaggregation of groups performing the analysis by age, gender, class, ethnic group etc. enables the comparison of experience and priorities of different groups. In policy terms a key application is often looking at *priorities for action or policy change.*
Wealth or wellbeing ranking	Involves the ranking of different individuals, households or communities according to an overall view of wellbeing. Useful for establishing the criteria by which the 'good life' is assessed by different groups, as well as the distribution within a given field. Can only be used within the limitations of the shared mutual knowledge of the group carrying out the analysis (detailed knowledge is need to establish the ranking). Performing such exercises for communities as well as households or individuals illustrates the significance of factors and assets which affect poverty at the community or group level (e.g. road infrastructure, common property resources such as fisheries and forests).
Charts illustrating cyclical change (seasonality, daily activities etc.)	These methods address the distribution of phenomena over time in more or less predictable cycles. These might include the incidence of disease through the year, the levels of food stocks – or the distribution of tasks and workload over a woman's day. Useful for illustrating dynamic dimensions of wellbeing – often poorly illustrated by conventional forms of poverty assessment.
Trend analysis	Various forms of illustration of long-term trends through visual representation or matrix scoring of phenomena over time – e.g. degradation of water resources.
Causal flow diagrams	Illustrate the group's understanding of basic causal linkages between phenomena (e.g. the causes of hunger). Also illustrates the perceived impacts of specific events or factors (violence, conflict, economic shocks etc.)
Participatory mapping	Representations of spatial distribution and location of resources, social groups, facilities etc. Wealth ranking can be established on a social map if the geographical distinctions between the units ranked are clear on the map.
Institutional diagramming [40]	Representation of different institutions, their significance, accessibility and relationships – usually as overlapping circles.
Drawings – pictorial representations	Visualisation of different conditions (poverty, well-being, disorder etc.). Often used with children

We have emphasised strongly throughout this manual that high-quality results from a PPA usually involve a marriage of the kind of approach to research embodied in the participatory

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[40] Also called venn diagramming, chapati diagrams.

methodologies with some more conventional types of skill and contextual knowledge. Involving social and political researchers and analysts who are willing to engage with the PPA agenda is recommended. Familiarity with the social and political context under investigation introduces a natural form of check on the findings of research generated by the relatively short periods of time usually spent by PPA teams in field communities.[41]

This brief review can not provide all the answers in selecting methods for field enquiry. This narrow question also relates strongly to two other key questions – the selection of sample sites and participants, and methods for overall synthesis and analysis. Hopefully the pointers towards practice and further literature will enable these areas to be pursued in more depth.[42] To conclude we can summarise a list of criteria by which the selection of an overall methodology for field investigation can be judged. The methodology is likely to be effective if it:

- Facilitates participants (men, women and children in poor rural and urban communities) producing their own analysis and assessment of poverty – its nature, distribution and causes;

- Triangulates results through providing multiple opportunities for confirming and refuting findings and exploring perspectives of different actors and groups;

- Makes effective use of existing knowledge and documentation;

- Makes efficient use of time for researchers and participants – and produces timely results.

3.4.3 Sampling – selecting research sights and participants

Section 3.2.1 above has already covered the key considerations in the selection of field sites for a PPA – but this is such a key issue that it merits further consideration.

The question of who participates in a PPA is critical to its results. The sample, among other factors, structures the representation which emerges. This representation has some quite distinct elements (the balance of these varies between different PPAs). Variously, PPAs seeks to represent people's priorities, opinions, preferences, experiences and analyses of poverty. PPAs also seek to enhance the understanding of poverty, its causes, distribution and the most effective policies for addressing key problems. Differing objectives in the PPA may suggest differing sampling priorities. For example, if a key objective is to understand the causes of poverty for particular excluded groups, then the PPA may focus on specific, marginalised communities. On the other hand, if a key objective is to understand what people see as the key priorities for poverty reduction at a national level, then a broader sample will strengthen the significance of the results.

There are two broad approaches to sampling, as defined by Carvalho and White (1997):

- *Probability sampling* is generally applied for national scale quantitative data collection. This involves selecting a sample in a way that every unit has some probability of selection, and that probability is known. The unit of selection is usually the household – and the instrument is often known as a 'random household sample survey'.

- *Purposive sampling* is generally used for contextual research whether quantitative or qualitative (that is research which analyses the findings in terms of a specific social, political and/or spatial context).[43] The assumption underpinning this approach is that a great deal can be

learned about issues of concern from the intensive study of a few key cases – selected for the purpose of investigating those issues.

In practice this is not a hard and fast distinction. Random sampling can be stratified to reflect particular characteristics (sampling among the rural poor, for example, or among communities which have low levels of social infrastructure). Equally purposive sampling will normally integrate some forms of quantitative data into the judgements made. In practice the judgement depends on those criteria according to which the purposive sample is to be constructed, and what forms of information exist to make judgements. Box 6 illustrates some of the various criteria which have been used in different PPAs for selecting research sites.[44]

Box 6   Examples of criteria used for selecting PPA Sites

All of the following have been used on different occasions, according to different measures and in different combinations to determine the selection of sites for PPA fieldwork.

- Level of income/consumption poverty

- Balance of rural/urban environments

- Agro-ecological zones

- Livelihood groups (fishing, pastoralist etc.)

- Level of socio-economic stratification

- Socio-cultural and linguistic groups

- Level of access to markets

- Level of transport infrastructure and access

- Level of social infrastucture

- Level of food insecurity/malnutrition

- Specific issues of social and cultural exclusion (e.g. street children)

- Level of monetisation of the rural economy

- Issues of conflict, human insecurity

A set of practical and ethical considerations also come into play – which may include the following:

- Availability of intermediaries for establishing contacts

- Accessibility and safety

- Logistics and costs

- Existence of institutional means to follow up with communities after the fieldwork

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In addition to the issue of selecting sites there are multiple levels of interactions which occur at the level of the field site which determine who will participate in the fieldwork, how actively, and with how much voice and influence. The category of the 'poor' itself becomes a major issue in the approach taken. In some field sites the majority of the population (or in extreme cases

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[44] PPAs in Mongolia, the Gambia, Tanzania and Kenya have made extensive use of household survey material in constructing sampling frames. See Narayan (1997) for an example of a PPA (Tanzania) with this approach to sampling.

everybody) may be under a national poverty line level of material consumption. To what extent should the team then seek to find the poorest in that social environment? In practice the process of selection at the local level is rough and ready (as in most forms of contextual research). Wealth ranking and social mapping can be very valuable in establishing categories in the population that can be followed up. The quality, credibility and reliability of the work can be greatly enhanced by following (as far as possible) a few basic rules:

■ *Document the process.* Individuals in the field will need to use their own best judgement according to the objectives and values of the exercise, but it is critical to document what those choices were and reflect on the influence (and bias) this may have introduced.

■ *Disaggregate participants.* This is both a methodological and conceptual issue. Group discussions separated by gender, age or wealth grouping will produce different perspectives and highlight different dimensions of the experience of deprivation. Participatory research that ignores the operation of levels of power and authority among the participants tends to be simply inaccurate. In many group contexts there are rules about who can or cannot speak on behalf of the group – unless these are understood then issues of gender or other dimensions of exclusion are likely to remain hidden.[45]

■ *Seek the hidden.* Often certain categories of people (especially the very poor) are not immediately acknowledged as members of the 'community' as it presents itself to the PPA team. They may not appear in wealth rankings or social maps, as they do not have rights to full participation. Sometimes such groups live well outside of recognised formal communities,[46] and sometimes they are on the geographical and social margins (e.g. migrant share-croppers in some parts of coastal West Africa). To be aware of the fact that social visibility is variable and cannot be taken for granted is extremely important.

3.4.4 Recording, analysis and dissemination

Planning for synthesis and analysis

This dimension of PPAs is particularly challenging. At the design stage, and as a priority for management, it tends to be underestimated. This may be because:

■ nobody involved has experience of the demands of analysing large amounts of mostly qualitative material;

■ many of the field teams are mostly practitioners by experience rather than researchers;

■ the considerable demands of organising and carrying out the fieldwork lead to putting off thinking about the analysis and synthesis of the material.

The precise plan for synthesis and analysis of results will depend to some extent on the structure of the PPA, but some useful principles can still be outlined:

■ It is good practice to start a PPA process with a review of relevant studies, information and materials that already exist. This will help to guide the fieldwork, and is also a very valuable input for the final write-up of results.

■ Field teams should meet regularly (after each day of fieldwork, on days put aside for reflection and writing) to discuss what they have found and write up the results. Teamwork, mutual support and discussion are critical. If 'writing up' becomes an individual activity it will be much harder to keep up enthusiasm. Scheduling time for this is very important.

■ The process of training and design should have developed and refined some reporting formats. These may include formats for recording all of the key information about particular exercises (group discussions, interviews etc.), or for particular intermediate 'products' on which the final report will be constructed (site reports, community profiles,

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[45] See Mosse (1994) for a case analysis of issues of gender and authority in PRA practice.

[46] Meaning in this case those geographical entities which are enumerated in census exercises, registered by the authorities, and featured on maps.

District reports etc.). Box 7 provides a rough guide to the elements which may be important to record during the facilitation of a PLA exercise (such as a social map, wealth ranking exercise or seasonality chart). This is given as an example of the kind of thinking and preparation that is needed. Guidance – both written and technical support in the field – is invaluable.

Box 7 Recording PLA exercises – elements to consider

Basic elements

- place, location (any particular characteristics that are important, e.g. public space or private)

- date, time of day, duration of the exercise

- participants (numbers, gender, ethnicity, age, names where appropriate, key individuals)

- facilitators/researchers present

- language issues (translation etc.)

- materials used for the exercise

Recording the process

- who participates? how does this change during the exercise?

- how was the exercise initiated and by whom?

- relevant aspects of the context for the exercise (social context, relevant information etc.)

- full reporting on the content of the discussion generated while the exercise is being carried out

- key quotations from participants

- points of interpretation essential to understanding the visual representation (matrix, chart, map)

After the exercise

- follow up interviews

- verification/cross checking from other information gathered

source: adapted from workshops for South Africa/Zambia PPAs

- Most PPAs have found it useful to develop a 'step-wise' process of analysis – where reports are compiled at different levels. Thus 'site reports' can be used to construct District level reports which are then useful as a basis for a national level report. This does not necessarily mean that preparing the final report can be the result of a neat, bounded 'pyramidal' process. Generally, it is necessary to go back to site reports and even the first stage of documentation – exercise reports – to be sure of particular issues. Nonetheless, the existence of an analytical and synthesis process prior to the final attempt to write up an overview report is critical. It gives structure to the exercise, highlights issues which can be followed up while the fieldwork is still in progress and accustoms team members to thinking through the issues which will need to be tackled in the final analysis. It should be noted that if an intermediate analysis is to be produced for districts or regions (between the site reports and the overall national level report) then issues of representation need to be considered at this level as well as at the national scale.

The process for producing the final analysis has been handled in different ways in different instances. It is also dependent on the structure of the material gathered. In the South Africa case a writing team including experienced poverty researchers and development practitioners convened to produce an overview analysis from a number of thematic reports from different locations. Where the PPA was carried out using a unified team and methodology, there is usually some attempt to use the memory and experience of the team itself, as well as the issues they documented, in the analytical process. Synthesis of findings and analysis of policy issues tends to be a complex process not only because of the quantity and range of material – but also because of the range of different knowledge and skills needed to do it well. In general the following three broad stages are necessary in the analysis process. The following outline programme assumes a 'unified' field process of the type described for the Uganda case study in section 4.

Stage 1: A synthesis workshop at which the field researchers participate in generating the main conclusions of the report and determining its structure. They may be joined by key policy actors for all or part of this to help to develop an analysis of policy issues as the workshop goes along. Methods used at this stage can include simple brainstorming and group discussions to generate main messages and conclusions. More complex variants of this are described by Attwood and May (1998) and Gaventa (1997). In these cases key dimensions of findings from a PPA are written out onto cards by teams working together to explore findings as outlined in reports or presentations. The raw material of the cards is then structured into themes through a collective process of sorting the cards. In working with these methods it is important to be aware that the length of the final analysis needs to be controlled. Many PPA processes have produced initial reports of several hundred pages in length. Editing these down to a usable length is very lengthy and difficult. Dissemination will require focused messages and a form of presentation that is not too time-consuming to digest. While some editing of the draft report is inevitable – this is much easier if the length has been kept under control at the drafting stage.

Stage 2: The raw synthetic material produced from the workshop is handed on to a small writing team. This team produces the initial reporting from the PPA which is circulated for discussion, review and comment. The initial draft report for comment and review will propose the major recommendations and findings of the PPA, and a structure for presentation of the evidence behind them. This draft may be produced by a single individual author – but this is not recommended. Four to five people often seems to be an appropriate size – it allows for work to progress reasonably quickly while the team is small enough to collaborate closely. It is not possible to give any absolute direction on the length of time that this stage will take. Experience suggests that two months is generally a realistic time-frame. Ideally the process is led by an experienced researcher who has participated in the fieldwork, and the rest of the writing team have also participated in the fieldwork.

Stage 3. The initial overview report is circulated to a range of stakeholders, including policy makers, participating institutions and appropriate independent reviewers. Of particular importance at this stage is the effort to draw in perspectives from people who may be able to use the results in a policy context. To hold workshops with policy-makers and other important actors at different levels (national, state, district) may be the best way of getting this feedback. This is the stage at which efforts to feed results back to participating communities are arguably the most useful in terms of contributing to the content of the analysis (do the people who participated consider the priorities and issues raised to be a reasonable reflection of their concerns?). To do this requires some effort to overcome problems of mediation – appropriate ways of presenting the information at local level will need to be developed. All of these forms of consultation on the initial presentation of results are dependent on prior thinking and planning – they will not happen unless resources and time have been put aside to make sure they do.

Stage 4. Based on the feedback gathered a range of products then needs to be produced for dissemination. These often need to balance conflicting concerns – to be accessible to busy policy makers, for example, while also presenting enough of the methodology and raw findings to enable reasonable judgement to be made on the quality of the process. Generally an overview report is produced – but the PPA team may also make inputs to a variety of different policy documents and processes, and produce short 'briefs' for particular audiences (politicians, media

etc.). In the Uganda PPA process the making of a video accompanied the fieldwork and analysis, which proved particularly valuable in disseminating the results and ensuring follow-up at the policy level (see section 4). Ultimately the impact of the PPA is likely to be enhanced if:

■ a small number of key high priority policy messages are generated, which can be distributed in summary form;

■ the team work with other analytical and policy processes and seek to ensure that the findings are integrated into national poverty monitoring and analysis processes which rely on other forms of enquiry (e.g. household surveys);

■ dissemination is approached through multiple channels – seminars, workshops, videos, short focused policy briefs – not just a single weighty field report.

The team that carries out the analysis should be familiar with at least some of the current range of approaches to the analysis of poverty or deprivation. The discussion under 2.4 above can be taken as a guide to the important broad conceptual areas.

Policy applications

The applications of PPAs to policy processes have been dealt with in some detail earlier in the guide (section 2.5). A typology was suggested which outlined two different types of engagement with policy formulation – one through enriching knowledge about poverty, and one through creating spaces within policy processes for negotiation and influence.

The kinds of processes within which PPA findings can influence policy change are usually reasonably obvious and (in different contexts) may include the following:

■ Poverty assessment, analysis and monitoring;

■ Formulation of plans which directly address poverty reduction at the national, sectoral or local level;

■ Design of legislative change needed to make systems of governance and planning more responsive to poor people's concerns;

■ Identification of priorities with budget processes, and of criteria for the assessment of the pro-poor content of budget proposals;

■ The assessment and monitoring of the outcomes of policy change and programmes directed at reducing poverty.

Empirical examples of policy influence are provided in section 4 below. One issue is worth highlighting at this point, which also relates to the previous section, and possible approaches to analysis and synthesis. Participatory research on poverty tends to produce an integrated, holistic, bottom up view of the nature of poverty and the actions that are needed to reduce it. In early PPAs there was often a tension between the frameworks which they produced and the sectorally structured process of government policy making (divided according to bureaucratic tradition and history into the big sector blocks such as health, education, agriculture etc.). Increasingly there is a recognition that the key outcomes which policy makers wish to promote (better health, better educated and skilled populations etc.) are not the result of bounded programmes of sector 'delivery' managed by line ministries. Health outcomes, for example, are the result of complex interactions of public sector and non-governmental actors – of which by far the most important are households and communities. This recognition forces policy makers to acknowledge that the categories and frameworks by which poor people understand and manage their lives are relevant and important for processes of policy formulation.

Matching with the findings of other methods for poverty analysis and monitoring

For those who undertake the design of policies and programmes aimed at reducing poverty the use of a range of different methods for assessing its distribution and causes has the fundamental attraction that it increases the sense of security attached to the picture of poverty which

underpins the analysis. Any 'single stranded' approach is more vulnerable to risks of bias and distortion – whether quantitative or qualitative, and whatever methods it is based on.[47]

When different approaches are used to triangulate findings in this way (between contextualised and non-contextual research, or quantitative and qualitative information sources, or participatory as against non-participatory methods) this amounts to using the potential of one set of information to *confirm, refute, enrich* or *explain* findings of the other.[48]

In addition to the use of different kinds of information to 'triangulate' findings – various attempts have been made to integrate different approaches methodologically. Again, the potential to iterate between two different kinds of approaches implies a certain level of mirroring. PPA results can be used to inform the design of the sampling frame for a household survey, by, for example providing information to help to stratify the sample. Equally, the results of quantitative research can be used to contribute to the identification of the study sites to be covered in a PPA. Likewise, the results of one kind of approach can help to determine the design of field methodology, and the identification of themes for investigation by the other. Such integration can be achieved to some extent by design – but it is also imperative if an effective approach to combining different approaches is to develop that the different communities of researchers work together and start to develop mutual understanding. There have been various approaches to this. In Zambia participatory methods were integrated into the cycles and planning of the poverty monitoring system requiring collaboration between the staff of the national statistical office and the researchers responsible for participatory monitoring, while in Uganda personnel from the statistics office participated in the fieldwork for the PPA.

The simplest form of combination between different approaches to the study and analysis of poverty is to use the findings of the two different approaches as inputs to the development of a single overview analysis (as happened with Uganda's Poverty Status Report, or many Country Poverty Assessments). Often this proceeds in a relatively straightforward manner – with each form of enquiry contributing observations in its areas of strengths. Sometimes, however, this can be contentious. Frequently conflicts focus on the interpretation of data concerning trends in the incidence or depth of poverty. If, for example, quantitative poverty line analysis shows a decrease in the number of people under the poverty line – a reported perception that poor people think things are getting worse will attract attention. However, both sets of results can be correct empirically – even though generating apparently contradictory results. There are a variety of reasons why the overall 'storyline' in terms of whether poverty is decreasing or increasing may differ between a PPA analysis and that produced by comparing the results of household surveys over time:

■ The time intervals being assessed may differ – household surveys illustrate trends that are measured between fixed points (the times of the surveys). Perceptions of trends, by contrast tend to measure longer periods – and with greater emphasis on broad long-term trends (e.g. between the 1960s and the present).

■ The dimensions of poverty being assessed also vary. Participatory assessment may take a broad multi-dimensional view, or focus more narrowly on specific dimensions of poverty (e.g. lack of food). Poor people often assess relative well-being according to the asset stocks available to offset shocks rather than the level of consumption.

■ The sample of the population involved differs. PPAs generally select purposively from among the poor – while the random probability sampling used for a household survey assesses the population as a whole, poor and non-poor.[49]

As noted in section 2.5 the comparative advantage of PPAs lies in illuminating causal linkages behind poverty trends (drawing on the understanding of people in poor communities) – rather than the project of measuring changes in a passive reality, which is the approach taken by trend analysis using household survey results. Both have their place, but working to produce an

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[47] Booth et al (1998) appeal for an approach of 'robust eclecticism' – which involves triangulating findings with information gathered from a variety of different methods and sources.

[48] Carvalho and White (1997)

[49] See McGee (2000) for a detailed analysis of a case study of differing results and interpretations of poverty trends in Uganda

effective integration is a long-term process, which has human dimensions as well as technical ones.

3.4.5 Managing the process

Management of a PPA process is demanding. The logistics of keeping the fieldwork running are often complicated. Managing relationships between multiple institutional partners can also be a source of pressure and stress. Conflicts may arise between members of field teams and the managers of the process over the mundane (form of financial support for field expenses) to the dramatic (whether to continue to work in a given area if conflict flares up). On the part of the managers of the process flexibility is needed, as well as patience and energy (regular visits to the field teams will be appreciated, but place time demands on those handling logistics and management). Stress on managers is greatly reduced if field team members respect the decision-making authority of those managing the process in relation to security and health issues. Experience suggests that field teams are often more prepared to take risks than the managers who are responsible for them. It is critical that everyone understands and agrees the safeguards that relate to any issues of personal security.

If the agencies providing financial support to the exercise are flexible over accounting for minor changes to the budget that will be a great help to dealing with contingencies which may arise (such as the need to re-visit areas which were inaccessible at the time planned for the fieldwork).

One final point is worth mentioning which managers of PPAs need to be aware of. PPA research is usually stressful personally and emotionally for the field teams. Contact with the experience of deprivation can be shocking (even for those who think they know what they will find), and the physical, social and emotional context for the researchers difficult (and sometimes dangerous). Where possible field teams should stay in the areas or communities they are working with – and this may create hazards which individuals are not used to. Managers need to be aware of this. Some basic elements for consideration are the following:

- the schedule should contain space for rest breaks;

- basic procedures for assuring health and safety of field researchers should be discussed and agreed;

- make sure that there are opportunities for members of the field teams to discuss their feelings and reactions during the fieldwork;

- team leaders need to know what the procedures are if people do get ill;

- the managers of the process should understand the issues facing the field teams – some exposure to the field research is important for everybody involved.

3.5 Challenges and future directions – from 'voice' to leverage

The practice of participatory research for policy change should constantly evolve. This evolution may involve conceptual, methodological, ethical and political elements. Changes may result from new contexts (such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper initiative associated with strengthening the poverty focus on debt relief and concessional lending by the IFIs), or from the development of new approaches. Some of the possible new directions that may be involved are explored in this section.

Moving from promoting 'voice' to enhancing poor people's leverage and power

The metaphor of amplifying or transmitting poor people's voices has been frequently applied to PPAs and similar exercises. The major exercise initiated to support the World Development Report 2000/01: Attacking Poverty (involving a 23 country research exercise and a review of existing PPAs[50]) was titled the 'Voices of the Poor'. The metaphor of 'voice' is powerful and communicates strongly with policy audiences for PPAs. It may also have some problematic connotations. It can entail an implied claim that the results presented are the unmediated views of 'the poor' – when in reality all PPAs are a mediated research process, with a variety of different actors involved. Quotations and other devices which imply direct contact with opinions of poor people are selected – and the process of authorship is also framed within structures of power and authority which influence the representation.[51]

A direction for the evolution of participatory research exercises in the future which certainly has scope for exploration is to move from a framework where influence predominantly occurs through consultation and voice to one which focuses on opportunities to increase poor people's leverage. Increasing poor people's leverage implies enhancing their capacity to directly challenge and change the decisions and structures of authority which affect them. *Conceptually* this is likely to involve an increased focus on understanding the operation of power and authority structures as they influence the production and reproduction of poverty. This entails a focus on how poor people's rights, entitlements and responsibilities are understood (by themselves and others) – and the role that differential levels of power play in determining this.[52] In terms of the *policy focus* of the exercise it is likely to involve an increased emphasis on the issues of governance (with corresponding implications in terms of the skills required within the field and analytical teams). In terms of the *structure of the exercise* it is likely to mean more emphasis on multiple levels of policy and implementation – with governance at local levels being as important as the influence on national policy processes. One particular *methodological* area of focus may be examining the extent to which participatory research processes can be used to enhance information flows *to* as well as *from* the poor – especially insofar as such information flows could enhance their capacity to make claims for support and influence in public policy.

Promoting institutional and personal change

Some of the most striking and exciting potentials for change in the practice of PPAs involve seeking to embed exercises of this kind in a broader process which facilitates continual learning and improvement of performance for institutions. This would imply using participatory research to influence not just the definitions of the outcomes that a particular government policy or strategy might seek to achieve, but also to give continuous feedback on the extent to which the intended beneficiaries perceive that they are seeing the intended improvements. A focus on key *outcomes* can thus be strengthened in the culture of public policy which has potentially radical implications for the its organisation and management. It could create pressure for a variety of institutions (governmental and non-governmental) to work together more effectively on the ground to achieve a goal – such as improved health of children in poor communities – the achievement of which no one institution can guarantee working on its own.

The potential for PPAs to influence policy through encouraging personal change is another area which may have been underestimated. An awareness of the potential value of this could influence the structure, practice and evaluation of PPAs. The implications for the future practice of PPAs can be seen in the following areas:

- *Focus of the PPA:* this would expand to include the facilitation of personal and institutional commitment and change.

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[50] Narayan (2000), Narayan et al (2000)

[51] See Chambers (2001 forthcoming) for a discussion of issues of power, authorship and representation in participatory research.

[52] The UK Department for International Development's Strategy document *Realising Human Rights for Poor People* (2000) indicates a commitment to 'develop participatory research methods which focus on people's own understanding of their human rights'.

- *Means of influencing policy change*: this would expand to encompassing a) personal learning of key staff in policy positions in government and donor agencies, b) influencing practice (i.e. policy made in implementation) as well as formal policy

- *Time frame*: a continuous or repeated process – providing feedback on the perception of policy impact and change

- *Key skills*: the analytical and human skills needed for facilitating institutional and personal change.

SECTION 4
Case studies

4.1 The Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Process

Authors: Bella Bird and Margaret Kakande

4.1.1 Background

Uganda is a landlocked country in Eastern Africa, with an estimated population of 22 million people, 47% of which are below 15 years of age. In 1986 Uganda emerged from a period of severe civil conflict. Under the leadership of the Ugandan President, Yoweri Museveni, Uganda is gradually being rebuilt. A greater level of security has been achieved, however, Uganda continues to be plagued by conflict in both the Northern and Western regions. Political and civil institutions have also been strengthened in recent years, but considerable challenges lie ahead for Uganda in achieving full political and social rights for the population, and building effective public institutions which can deliver effective services to the population.

Approximately 83% of Uganda's population live in the rural areas. The economy relies heavily on the agricultural sector which currently accounts for 43% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP); and provides the main source of livelihood for over 80% of the population. Economic performance over the past decade has been impressive. In real terms, the GDP has expanded at an annual rate of more than 6% over the decade. Despite this progress Uganda is still one of the world's poorest countries, with a GDP per capita of US$320 in 1997.

4.1.2 Origins of the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Process (UPPAP)

UPPAP originated in a context where poverty was becoming a key priority of the Uganda Government. The Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) was developed in 1996 and launched in 1997, and was a policy statement of how Government intended to mainstream poverty concerns in almost all areas of policy and implementation. The adoption of the PEAP was the beginning of a process of intended to mainstream poverty concerns across the actions of Government.

A significant level of consultation had been undertaken in developing the PEAP, across Government and with donors, academia and NGOs. However, there were individuals in Government who were conscious of the fact that the poor themselves had not been consulted. The concept of UPPAP was born during a World Bank Country Assistance Strategy consultation process involving the then Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MPED), the World Bank and DFID. Through the useful but brief consultation with the poor undertaken it was startlingly evident that a much wider consultation process would be highly beneficial to further the development and monitoring of the Government's poverty policy. Thus UPPAP was developed, firstly with financial backing from DFID and the World Bank, and in-kind support from MPED.

4.1.3 The design process

Incorporating lessons from previous PPAs

At the time when UPPAP was designed (1997), PPAs had been carried out in several countries, and there was a wealth of material both on design of the research itself and on the strengths and weaknesses of the processes through which PPAs had been implemented. A conscious effort was made to research this experience and incorporate the lessons into project design. Early activities of the UPPAP process also helped to shape it's design:

■ A study visit to Tanzania was undertaken by members of the UPPAP Technical Committee to review the experience in Tanzania of undertaking a PPA. The members of the team were struck by the lack of ownership of the PPA by the Tanzanian Government, and the absence of follow up to the process that had been undertaken. This reinforced the resolve of the key players in UPPAP to ensure a robust process and strong policy linkages in Uganda.

■ In addition, a desk study was undertaken of all previous participatory studies of poverty in Uganda. This exercise found that while many useful studies had been undertaken, there were gaps in the research, and there was a clear need for a comprehensive 'national' participatory study of poverty.

From previous PPA experience, three important lessons were incorporated into UPPAP's design:

The need for a process to link to policy

One of the most striking features of previous PPA experience was the number of cases where research had been undertaken but had not been linked to policy processes. In many countries, PPAs had generated valuable lessons for policy and its implementation, but there was limited evidence of action being taken as a result of the findings, or significant policy influence.

It was evident that to be fully effective a PPA needed to be more than a one off exercise, and have a strategy to follow up on the findings and a mechanism for linking them with policy development and implementation. A three year process was thus designed, which incorporated processes to link the findings both with central and district level policy making. The focus on districts was particularly important in the decentralised context of Uganda where increasingly, responsibility for service delivery is being passed to local governments.

Relating the PPA research to the policy environment

If the PPA was to have relevance to policy there was a need to investigate issues that policy makers wanted to know more about, and fill gaps identified in the desk study. Therefore areas not traditionally covered by PPAs were included, such as: governance; people's knowledge of existing policies; people's experience of policy implementation; in addition to improving the understanding of poverty and service delivery issues. Policy makers consulted were keen to know whether their policy framework was relevant to the needs of the poor.

The decentralised context of Uganda required that UPPAP produce findings relevant at the district level as well as the national level.

Linking participatory research into the poverty monitoring system and building sustainable capacity for participatory policy research

If participatory policy research was to become part of the process of linking the perspectives and voice of the poor into policy it needed to become integrated into the poverty monitoring system. In addition, to enable this to occur, the need was recognised to build sustainable capacity in country for both undertaking rigorous participatory policy analysis and the acceptance and use of the findings.

The key objectives of UPPAP

In the light of the above thinking, the objectives of UPPAP were defined as follows:

Purpose: to bring the voice of the poor in national and district planning for poverty reduction

Outputs:

- Enhanced knowledge about the nature and causes of poverty and strategies for action generated and applied.

- District capacity in planning and implementation for poverty reduction strengthened through enhanced use of participatory methods.

- A national system for participatory and qualitative poverty monitoring developed.

- Capacity for participatory policy research established in Uganda.

These objectives were to be achieved over a three year period. The first year concentrating on carrying out a 'national' PPA with communities in nine of the forty five districts in Uganda, selected using a 'maximum variation' sampling framework.

In the second year it was envisaged that at a national level, dissemination of the findings would continue, while within the nine districts, the findings of the research would be followed up and activities undertaken to sustain the use of participatory methods to inform planning of the priorities of the poor. The focus of the design was on setting up a process. The UPPAP design deliberately established strategic directions and partnership mechanisms rather than detail of anticipated activities. It was understood from the beginning that the course of UPPAP was likely to be unpredictable and would be influenced by the rapidly changing policy environment and institutional context in which it was situated.

The Partnership

Government Leadership of a multi-stakeholder partnership

Government was very much in the lead from the beginning, and in control of the design process. It was agreed that UPPAP would be best taken forward in a multi-stakeholder framework, consisting of Government, donors, research institutions and NGOs. NGOs were given the lead in implementation due to their expertise in the area of participatory methodologies. Oxfam was chosen as the main implementing agency due primarily to their involvement in policy work in Uganda and their perceived capacity to take on such a large and strategic project. Nine research institutions and local NGOs chosen as partners, who would provide experienced researchers to the process and be involved in setting the strategic direction of the process through involvement in the UPPAP Technical Committee.

Building consensus

It was seen as critically important to build consensus around the UPPAP objectives. This was a new process for Government and wide buy in was seen as necessary to achieve the ambitious goals of the process. A Technical Committee was set up by Government, with the purpose of bringing together representatives of various donors and implementing partners, including Government departments such as the Uganda Bureau of Statistics to build consensus around the objectives of UPPAP and provide technical inputs to guide implementation.

4.1.4 The policy & institutional context

Overall the policy and institutional context has been favourable to the development of UPPAP. However, UPPAP itself has also contributed to the further opening up of the policy and institutional context.

The policy and institutional environment in Uganda is rapidly evolving. When UPPAP was first initiated, the first PEAP was in place, and the process of decentralisation to districts was underway (see table of sequential events). There are three key factors which have ensured that UPPAP has been able to feed into key policy processes as they emerge:

■ Poverty has stayed high on the Government's agenda. The continued commitment of the President of Uganda to poverty eradication is absolutely fundamental to keeping the focus of Government on achieving this goal.

■ The location of UPPAP in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MFPED), has been a critical factor in its success. MFPED is an innovative Ministry with strong leadership that has shown itself to be willing to take up new ideas, embark on reform processes, and importantly, take on the political negotiation necessary to move them forward.[53] The integration of the planning and budget process in Uganda is strong – which enhances the potential impact of the policy process in general.

■ The continued support by senior Government officials for UPPAP within MFPED, despite staff changes over the period of implementation, has ensured that UPPAP has been positioned to benefit from institutional changes and has access to key policy processes of Government. Key senior level staff in MFPED have been open to learn from the UPPAP process and have shown great appreciation for the insights it has provided on the poverty situation in Uganda.

These three critical factors, have enabled UPPAP to respond to the various developments in the institutional context that have taken place during the period of implementation of UPPAP to date (1997-2000) which have had a significant impact on what it has been able to achieve:

Institutionalisation of poverty monitoring and policy linkages in government

In 1999 the Poverty Monitoring and Analysis Unit (PMAU) was established in MFPED to oversee the government's poverty monitoring function, and to collate quantitative and participatory data on poverty from both government and non-government sources for the purposes of feeding it into policy formulation. UPPAP is situated within the same department of MFPED as the Poverty Monitoring Unit and the links are strong. The PMAU produced a highly influential and hard hitting Poverty Status Report in 1999, which brought together the findings from the household surveys, UPPAP and other relevant studies in Uganda, and used them to assess progress and identify key challenges facing Government in tackling poverty.

Opening up the budget process

During the 1998/9 budget preparation MFPED started to open up the national budget process, bringing in civil society, encouraging public debate and setting up sector working groups on the budget which included civil society and donor representatives. In the 2000/01 budget process a cross cutting 'poverty eradication working group' (PEWG) was established to consider on the basis of the poverty analysis that is available, inter and intra sectoral allocations of resources and other budgetary issues, such as taxation, that needed re-assessment from the perspective of impact on the poor. Individuals involved in UPPAP and the findings of the participatory analysis have played a key role in the work of this group.

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[53] This is most startlingly evident in the area of economic management, for which the Government of Uganda has received much praise in recent years, and has resulted in significant increases in the flows of finance towards priority areas for tackling poverty.

Key cross cutting issues emerging from UPPAP and the household survey data have been applied in policy and expenditure analysis: the information needs of the poor; actions proposed to address gender and geographical inequalities and the needs of the poorest 20%; action proposed to tackle poverty issues that fall between sectors, i.e. nutrition and sanitation; level of attention being paid to monitoring and supervision of the implementation of sector policy. This analysis has led to significant policy recommendations.

Increasing resources for poverty focused expenditures

Government has increased the flows of resources towards sectors recognised as key to eradicating poverty. When the first PEAP was developed the priority areas for additional resources were feeder roads, primary education, agricultural extension and primary health care. Resource allocation to these areas has incrementally increased since 1997/8. As additional resources and increased knowledge on the priorities of the poor has become available, additional priority areas were added. These include, water supply and enhancing accountability of government. Uganda qualified for enhanced HIPC debt relief first in 1998/9 and again in 2000/01. This has significantly increased resources for poverty related expenditures.

Sector wide approaches

Sector wide working has been adopted as a concept by Government and reflected in the further development of sector working groups on the budget. Sector wide approaches with donors are most strongly developed within the sectors of health and education. The concept of sector working has been used as an opportunity to open up resource allocation decisions of Government and increase the transparency of policy development, expenditure and outcomes, and has been extended across departments and 'sectors' (loosely defined).[54] Primarily through the PEWG, UPPAP has fed into these sector discussions key points which need to be considered to increase the poverty focus of policy implementation.

Other policy development processes

Other policy processes relevant to poverty, such as the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA) have been under development. This 'Plan' is seen as a key strategy for improving the incomes and livelihoods of the poor. The focus of the PMA has been informed by UPPAP data, which in particular, brought in the issues of food security, and the need for policy to address the key frustrations and constraints faced by the poor in improving their livelihoods. More widely, UPPAP has influenced the proposed implementation framework for the PMA, in demonstrating that the problems and therefore the solutions to poverty vary throughout the country, a greater appreciation of the need for greater devolution of planning processes to the community level has been developed.

Revision of the PEAP

A decision was made to revise the PEAP three years after its initial publication. The availability of new data on poverty from UPPAP and the household surveys was influential in this development. The revision of the PEAP coincided with the requirement of the World Bank and IMF to produce a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) as a basis for qualifying for HIPC debt relief. UPPAP has generated policy recommendations which feature centrally in the PEAP.

Decentralisation

The Government of Uganda is embarking on a process of decentralisation which was started in 1993. Decentralisation puts responsibility for service delivery in the hands of the districts and is designed to allow for local decisions on key priorities for taking forward planning for tackling poverty and increased local accountability. UPPAP was designed to support the decentralised

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[54] Examples include the Sector Working Groups on the budget process, which include the traditional sectors of health, education and water, as well as accountability and law and order 'sectors' which bring together the key institutions working in the area for the purposes of establishing clear strategies and outputs, against which the effective utilisation of inputs will be measured.

context by generating district level reports in the districts in which it is operating and allowing for follow up at this level, as well as extracting key findings for the national synthesis report.

Availability of quantitative data on poverty and continued data collection

During the period of UPPAP implementation, the first reliable statistical information became available on poverty trends, and other factors such as levels of service delivery utilisation by the poor.[55] The availability of this data significantly enhanced the usefulness of the UPPAP data, as it illustrated the extent of some of the problems identified under UPPAP and explained the reasons behind some of the statistical findings.

Health is a good example of this. UPPAP ranking exercises revealed ill health as the number one cause of poverty identified by the poor. The household data revealed that of a nationally representative sample of the population, only 20% of the population were using Government health services when ill. UPPAP provided valuable insights into why people are not using Government health services (drug leakage, abuse of cost sharing and the negative attitude of many health workers), which has provided valuable information for policy development and implementation.

Another example is corruption. The National Integrity Survey, carried out in 1998, revealed the extent of corruption in the country and the population's perspectives on corruption and service delivery with a nationally representative sample. UPPAP illustrated some of the dynamics of corruption from the perspective of people in poor communities, such as: lack of information; poor and unaccountable leadership; and a perceived lack of voice of poor households in local democratic institutions.

The household surveys have become an annual exercise of Government and generate a wide range of very useful information on poverty. UPPAP has been able to interact with the Uganda Bureau of Statistics to refine and improve the questionnaires. For example, questions on insecurity its effects are now a feature of the annual survey.

Challenges faced in the policy context

UPPAP has certainly not been accepted in every department of Government and by every agency involved in Uganda's development without question. There was some suspicion about the ability of participatory data to contribute to increased understandings of poverty and specific policy responses. UPPAP had to prove itself by generating information that was robust and useful to policy makers, by paying careful attention to the quality of the research and analysis and ensuring that the findings were presented in an easily digestible form. In addition, not all Government departments demonstrate the level of commitment to tackling poverty as MFPED. For example, it took a Presidential initiative to set up a Commission of Enquiry into the Police Force to open up corruption and abuse of power among the police, which impacts disproportionately upon the poor and powerless.

4.1.5 UPPAP findings & policy responses

So what are the findings that have made UPPAP so useful within the policy context? The UPPAP findings covered a range of issues including descriptions and definitions of poverty, statements on poverty trends, social issues, experiences with service delivery and implementation of policy, and governance and security issues.

The UPPAP findings revealed a highly complex picture of poverty, out of which key messages could be drawn for shaping Government responses to poverty. The findings have only been publicly available for six months prior to the writing of this chapter, however there have already been some significant shifts in policy at the national level. The impact is likely to be felt

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[55] The findings from the set of household surveys 1992-97 became available in 1998 and a National Integrity Survey was also undertaken in 1998.

increasingly over the next 12 months, as the findings are further disseminated and internalised at national and district levels, and follow up work is undertaken.

UPPAP findings have stimulated policy responses in a number of broad areas:

Redefinition of priorities of Government (i.e. the original areas of priority under the PEAP were confirmed, however, safe water has received significantly more resources, and the actions to improve security, governance and public service delivery to the poor have become central features of the new PEAP);

- missing links in the processes of implementation of policy (i.e. the weakness in information flows, the need for budget flexibility to allow lower level Governments to respond to local priorities and political accountability);

- shifts in the focus of sector policies to be increasingly pro-poor (i.e. agricultural policy);

- highlighting key inter-sectoral areas important to tackling poverty that current structures of Government are not well equipped to handle (i.e. nutrition, sanitation, information)

Not all of the policy responses can be attributed entirely to UPPAP, in many cases they have confirmed what has been 'suspected' or enhanced the focus on issues that have been highlighted in other studies or surveys. The power of the UPPAP material however, is that it does represent poor people's views, and in a context where political commitment to poverty eradication is high, and political leaders are increasingly being called to account for their promises to the electorate, this carries considerable weight.

Many of the separate findings have illustrated the dynamics of poverty and reinforced each other in establishing the basis for policy recommendations. For example, the findings on powerlessness, corruption and restricted information flows to communities have led to a strong policy recommendation on improving public information as a cross cutting issue affecting all of government. Not all of the policy responses listed below have been translated into action as yet, but the statements in the table illustrate areas either where further work is being undertaken or approaches are being reconsidered, in for example the drafting of the new PEAP.

There are other key findings of UPPAP to which there are no clear policy responses as yet: lack of social cooperation as a cause of poverty; excessive alcohol consumption as a cause of poverty; seasonal vulnerability during the rainy season and in times of drought; and the negative impact of current local tax structures on the poor. These issues will be picked up and analysed further over time.

Findings	Policy responses
Poverty varies across the country, it is not uniform, and the responses to tackling poverty must reflect this.	■ Recognition that central government grants to districts should have more flexible conditions attached to allow districts to respond to their priorities ■ Refocus on the need for bottom up planning to work effectively in the decentralised context
The need for safe water supply a priority of the poor	■ Significantly more resources have been directed to improving water supply, including HIPC resources*
The people are outraged by the level of corruption in the country, and the ineffectiveness of Government in delivering basic services	■ Additional focus in the PEAP on Governance and accountability* ■ Measures to increase political accountability being considered for funding with HIPC savings ■ Sectors requested to consider strengthening the links between service delivery and performance monitoring by local political leaders ■ Increased transparency through enhanced flows of information being developed*
People lack information on Government policies, resource flows, how it is intended that they benefit from services and government programmes	■ Information needs of the poor adopted as a cross cutting issue for recommendations to sectors by PEWG in poverty assessment ■ Public information strategy being developed ■ Increased resources to institutions responsible for public information being considered against clear outputs
Powerlessness as a key dimension of poverty, defined in terms of women lacking voice and being subject to domestic violence; inability to call Government to account; lack of information; factors beyond the control of individuals or communities, ie. crop disease, disasters, insecurity.	■ Need to improve information flows to the public on their rights, resource flows and how it is intended that they should benefit from Government programmes ■ Need to strengthen political accountability ■ Need for increasing Government on adult literacy, with a focus on women*
Isolation is a key cause of poverty, this encompasses geographical and social isolation both between areas of the country and within districts and communities	■ Re-emphasised the issue of geographical disparities both between regions and within districts in access to services and opportunities as a cross cutting issue for poverty reduction policy and resource flows, and strengthened the demand for more targeted interventions.
Insecurity (due to war, insurgency and cattle rustling) is a fundamental factor preventing the poor moving out of poverty, insecurity also encompasses theft and domestic violence	■ Raised the issue of insecurity as a key cause of poverty on the political agenda ■ Questions being asked about the effectiveness of the use of the defence budget to protect the poor
Government seen as very distant by the people, village leaders however, generally appreciated	■ Proposal to strengthen the role of elected village councils in monitoring the performance of public service delivery in new PEAP
Revealed the frustrations faced by local people in improving their livelihoods to achieve food security and higher incomes	■ Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture refocused on to food security and basic production needs of the poor*
Poor communities appreciated being consulted on their views of poverty, policy and their priorities, & expressed a desire that Government continues to consult them on policy development, as well as monitor the implementation of policy at community level in order to ensure that the benefits of programmes intended for the poor are delivered as intended.	■ Plan to integrate participatory monitoring of the implementation of the PEAP into Government's poverty monitoring framework* ■ Mechanisms for local level accountability and monitoring of service delivery to the poor being considered.

*areas where there is evidence of substantial action by Government to date

4.1.6 Wider impacts

The findings and the process of UPPAP has had a range of wider impacts, beyond direct shifts in policy, both within Uganda and beyond.

Changing or strengthening perceptions of poverty and the poor

Data collected through participatory consultations has impacts which are often difficult to quantify and somewhat intangible in their nature. Some of the changes noted to date in Uganda are illustrated by quotes of Government officials made in relation to UPPAP:

- Recognition by former sceptics that the poor are highly capable of identifying key causes and consequences of poverty, their own priorities and the what the priorities of Government should be. *'I used to think that poverty was all about GDP growth, but now I can't believe what I am thinking and saying about poverty'* (Senior Government Official June 1999), and on the findings on the priorities of the poor *'I couldn't be humbled any more, that, even in primary education we had captured our priorities upside down'* (December 1999).

- Recognition that despite well articulated intentions of Government, the poor are not feeling the positive impact of Government policies and actions in the way they should be. *' The participatory consultations have shown us what we have suspected all along, that the public service is not delivering benefits to the poor'* (Top level Government Official

- Changing common perceptions about the 'un-deserving' poor – that their poverty is their own fault, due to laziness and alcoholism and they must be 'sensitised' out of their poverty inducing behaviour. *'Let everybody know... what their rights are, what their entitlements are, and then demand for it'* (Government Official, December 1999)

- For politicians and senior officials who are committed to changing the lives of the poor, the voice of the poor carries powerful messages which can invigorate or refocus their thinking and commitment. *'The poor will hold us in Government to account for delivery of policies and plans which are poverty focused... So let's listen'* (Senior Government Official December 1999)

- Strengthening awareness of the lack of accountability in Government for delivering services and the links to poverty. *'An old woman in one location... asked about Government and us who work in Government, she turned and said, 'look in that office, it is full of maggots and they are all pregnant' and I guess she was talking about a number of us who are corrupt, and therefore she was not getting the services that she should be getting'.* (Senior Government Official, December 1999).

- Recognition of the right of the poor to have a say in Government policy and the sense in hearing and acting on what they have to say. *'It would be foolhardy of Government to try and do things for the poor without their consultation, because they know what their problems are... and they can articulate them at best'* (Top level Government Official, December 1999).

- Recognition of poor people as actors in rather than subjects of development. *'We want the communities of the poor people to be part and parcel of our team... they have their own functions and roles both in eradicating poverty in the long term and taking action in their own community'* (Senior Government Official, December 1999)

Shifting the definition of poverty

Prior to the UPPAP process, the official analysis of poverty was confined to a limited set of findings from the household survey data. While this data was useful in understanding responses of the consumption patterns of the poor to developments in country, it did not provide a picture of poverty which Ugandans could relate to and locate in their own experience. The UPPAP analysis has shifted the discourse on poverty, bringing an understanding of poverty which is relevant to how Ugandans see poverty in their own country. This shift in understanding is critically important, as the way in which poverty is understood, has a fundamental influence on the nature of responses and actions to address it. The direct impact of this shift in the definition of poverty is evident in the revised PEAP, where the multi-dimensional nature of poverty is clearly recognised. The definition of poverty now incorporates

dimensions such as isolation, powerlessness and gender inequality, in addition to the traditional consumption deficit definition.

Building Government/Civil Society Relationships

For both MFPED and the Civil Society Organisations involved in the UPPAP process, the UPPAP partnership has had positive impacts. The 'seconding' of Oxfam personnel to work within MFPED has been a unique feature of UPPAP. As has the network of UPPAP partners, who through UPPAP have had greater input and exposure to the poverty analysis and policy development processes of Government. For Government, there has been a greater appreciation of the contribution that Civil Society Organisations can make to the development of poverty analysis and poverty policy. Spin offs from this partnership are greater involvement of civil society in policy processes, including the development of the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture, and the revised PEAP.

4.1.7 Features of the implementation process

In addition to the nature of the design of UPPAP and the context in which it has been implemented, the way in which it has been implemented has also contributed to UPPAP's success, as well as presented some challenges.

Ongoing involvement of senior government officials

The ongoing involvement of senior government officials in periodic management meetings has assisted the UPPAP implementation process to stay relevant to the wider policy context. Among the strategic direction provided are: areas of focus for the research; winning UPPAP acceptability; staffing issues; prioritisation of activities; and mechanisms for dissemination of results.

The partnership

The partnership of Government, donors, academic institutions and NGOs in taking forward the UPPAP process is a fairly unique one in the Uganda context. This partnership has been widely valued and often referred to as a 'new way of working' in development'. It has also inevitably had tensions due to the different institutional identities and cultures of the different actors. One of the successes of UPPAP has been through the management structure to bring the partners together around the UPPAP mission and utilise their respective strengths.

Flexibility and responsiveness

Another key factor in UPPAP's success was its ability to be flexible and responsive to developments in the wider policy environment. This was facilitated by two key elements: flexibility in the funding arrangements, enhanced by having the key funding agencies close to the process; the ability to make staff and information available in a timely way to feed into the development of policy processes.

National and district Focus

UPPAP has built relationships not only at the national level, but also at the district level. Research teams in each district included representatives of the district administration and a local NGO, in order to provide some level of capacity in undertaking this research. Strong linkages were made with district planning units, and the findings were fed back to the district administrative and political leaders. The fact that the research was undertaken within the framework of Government, provided a context where often very challenging findings could be presented to districts leaders.

The way in which UPPAP findings have been disseminated to date has also contributed to the impact of the findings. Key events include, the inclusion of a chapter on poverty in the 1999/2000 Background to the Budget; the presentation of the key findings at the high profile launch of the Poverty Status Report; and the production and dissemination of the UPPAP video. The target audiences for dissemination have been political leaders as well as civil servants, donors and civil society.

Two features of the dissemination process have been particularly important:

■ The method of video has been particularly effective, in many ways more effective than the textual representation of findings. A limited proportion of the audience of UPPAP have the time to read lengthy documents. The UPPAP video which features the people from communities speaking strongly on very challenging issues such as corruption, exploitation, gender discrimination and ineffective service delivery, combined with senior Government officials responding to these issues has been a very challenging and successful tool for dissemination, both within Uganda and beyond; and

■ The framework provided by senior MFPED officials in which the very challenging findings could be disseminated and discussed openly in policy making processes.

Key to effective dissemination processes is an understanding of what dissemination is intended to achieve. UPPAP's dissemination has been designed to bridge the gap between policy dialogue and development and the reality that the poor face on the ground.

4.1.8 Challenges

UPPAP has been running for only eighteen months, and the momentum and impact of the process to date has been surprising to all involved. Many challenges have been encountered and still face UPPAP in the coming years.

The acceptability of participatory data

Achieving acceptability for participatory data has been a major challenge for UPPAP. There have been suggestions that UPPAP data is 'anecdotal' or 'unrepresentative' or 'representative of only the poorest communities in Uganda'. This was particularly problematic in relation to UPPAP data on poverty trends, which early in the analysis process appeared to contradict the consumption poverty data showing dramatic reductions in poverty.

These challenges have been managed in a number of ways:

■ In the research process, triangulation of findings was carried out through use of different methodologies to ensure that conclusions reached were robust;

■ Presenting the sampling framework clearly;

■ Quality assurance of the data processing has been key, and a careful and thorough process of synthesis;

■ On the controversial issue of poverty trends, UPPAP commissioned further analytical work by an international technical adviser to clarify the what the two data sets were saying about poverty trends.

The rigour and re-analysis required to ensure quality took time, and led to delayed release of the final report.

Extractive research or empowering the poor?

A key dilemma in the UPPAP process which has emerged at various points is whether UPPAP is a research project designed to extract information from communities for the purposes of policy, or whether it was designed to empower the poor directly. UPPAP has attempted to cut a

middle ground between these two points at both the community level and through national and district level policy dialogue.

The research process included a Community Action Plan (CAP) activity. Each of the thirty six communities consulted was facilitated to develop a CAP, identifying their key priority problem which they could tackle themselves. It is intended that in the next phase of UPPAP, follow up on the CAPs will be undertaken.

There has been some debate over whether or not UPPAP should provide funds for follow up to the CAPs directly to communities. The range of views illustrates one of the dilemmas at the heart of participatory research. While the process of participatory research can lead to raising expectations of communities for action, the key issue is who should be responsible for assisting the communities in realising these expectations, Government or an external agency? Should UPPAP remain focused on policy change, or become involved directly in supporting activities in participating communities? This issue is yet to be fully resolved within the UPPAP context.

In broader terms, and as illustrated in the table above, UPPAP has attempted to identify key actions and approaches to enhance the empowerment of the poor that can be integrated into policy development. Further analytical work is required on this issue.

Ensuring a sufficient understanding of policy and policy processes

For any research to be policy relevant, an understanding of policy frameworks and processes is fundamental. UPPAP has found it difficult to recruit staff who understand the policy arena in Uganda sufficiently. NGOs and the individuals involved from research institutions have limited exposure to policy environments. It is the case more widely that experts in participatory research tend to have focused on projects and micro processes rather than policy research, and efforts to bridge this gap are required in Uganda, as elsewhere. In retrospect, it was agreed that researchers required more briefing on policy frameworks to inform them in undertaking the research, and a greater level of technical guidance in this area.

Policy literacy and exposure is also fundamental to a successful dissemination process. Policy development is not a linear process and is subject to many pressures which need to be understood in order for dissemination to be effective. UPPAP has been fortunate to have the support of senior officials in Government and donor partners[56] to identify and promote the dissemination of UPPAP data in a highly opportunistic fashion. However, a great deal more could have been done if attempts had been made to map out policy making processes, identify pressure points and design a strategy for dissemination in a timely and responsive way.

Analysis of the data and writing up the research

One of UPPAP's key challenges has been undertaking rigorous analysis and synthesis of the findings of UPPAP at all levels of report writing from site level to the national report. Writing up of participatory data collection is a difficult task due to the diversity of the information collected in many different contexts, and the need for cross checking against the different exercises used in the research. Inevitably, much detail is lost in the process of aggregation of findings, and there is a genuine challenge in aggregating, while at the same time representing the diversity of findings. National level policy contexts often demand clear, concise recommendations, while findings of participatory data through revealing the complexities of the reality of social situations can sometimes fail to generate clear recommendations for action. As with all research, judgement calls are necessary at certain points in the analysis.

Due to the interactive nature of participatory research, a team approach to making these judgements in the analysis and presentation of the data is called for. In retrospect, the analysis of the UPPAP findings may have been better managed by a small team comprising individuals with various skills: policy literacy; direct involvement in the research; and strong writing and presentation skills.

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[56] Individuals with donors agencies such as the World Bank, IMF and DFID have played an important role in identifying opportunities and making suggestions for dissemination of both the UPPAP findings and the process.

Managing the partnership

The complex institutional partnership of Government, NGOs, research institutions and donors involved in UPPAP has been one of its successful features, but has also presented challenges. In such a partnership where institutional identities and cultures differ, the clarification of the roles of the different agencies involved and the maintenance of transparent communication and decision making is critical to its success. One major challenge has been for the partners to submerge their own organisational identities within UPPAP which sits under the framework of Government. A clearer definition of the roles of the different agencies involved (whether funding, implementing or participating in the research) would have assisted in the smoother functioning of this relationship.

Another dimension of the partnership has been the issue of NGO advocacy. Questions have been raised as to the appropriateness of NGO partners engaged in the UPPAP process using the findings to 'lobby' Government, when they are in effect partners of Government in the process. Has their involvement reduced their ability to act as a 'watchdog' on Government?

Building capacity of partners

Associated with the issue of 'the partnership' is the issue of building capacity of partners to undertake participatory policy research, one of the initial objectives of UPPAP. In deciding who the 'research partners' would be a decision was made to expand the number of partners from one initially, to nine. While this had the positive effect of extending the network of institutions in the process, it also diluted the capacity built in any one of the institutions involved, (though certainly the capacity of individuals from these institutions has expanded). The building of capacity for participatory policy research in Uganda remains a challenge for UPPAP.

Maintaining the focus at national <u>and</u> district levels

As UPPAP is located at a national level the focus of activity has been at this level. District level follow up is much more complex, due to the number of districts covered by UPPAP (nine), the need for an understanding of complex processes of district planning, and the difficulties inherent in the current structure for financing of district plans. Limited capacity at district level is also a significant constraint. Further refinement of UPPAP's approach to follow up at district level is required.

Achieving real change for the poor

While UPPAP has been successful in terms of its immediate purpose of 'bringing the voice and perspective of the poor into national and district level planning' there is some distance to go before this achievement is translated into real change for poor communities, households and individuals in Uganda. While there are many promising policy developments in Uganda geared to establishing an effective planning framework for achieving poverty reduction and empowerment of the poor, major obstacles remain. UPPAP is one small, but important part of a wider picture of policy and planning for poverty eradication. The onus is on Government and other actors (politicians, the private sector, civil society, and donors through setting appropriate policies for aid delivery) to take forward strategies which are informed by and result in positive change for the poor in Uganda. The responsibility of the UPPAP process is to continue to act as a catalyst for change to enhance the responsiveness of these actors to the poor.

Success despite the many challenges faced

The UPPAP implementation process has been far from perfect. As a high profile process linked to policy, pressures upon UPPAP to deliver have been intense and the time pressure tight. There have been difficulties in writing up the data, and production of the final report was concluded around a year after the fieldwork was finished. This however has not inhibited the use of the research findings due to the high level Government support for UPPAP.

Finding staff with the appropriate level of expertise and interpersonal skills to function effectively within the ambitious UPPAP process has been difficult. The need to shift bureaucratic obstacles in the functioning of partner organisations in order that UPPAP can be as flexible and responsive as it needs to be to be effective has also been a challenge.

4.1.9 Future directions

UPPAP now has the challenge of consolidating and building on achievements to date. There are various expectations of what UPPAP can achieve, and potential directions that it could choose to pursue. Several likely areas of focus are outlined below.

Further dissemination and internalisation of the findings

It is intended that the national and district reports will be widely distributed to and internalised by Government and non-Government stakeholders at all levels. In addition, papers relevant to particular sectors will be developed for relevant sector ministries, and presented to policy makers. Follow up work will be undertaken to identify areas for public action. This will be considerably more of a challenge at district level than at the national level.

Institutionalising participatory monitoring

Government is in the process of elaborating the poverty monitoring framework in the PEAP. It has been agreed that the system will use both quantitative and participatory sources of information and data. Participatory poverty assessments have not been previously used as a periodic monitoring tool at a national level, and it is a challenge for UPPAP to achieve this.

Use of statistical and participatory methodologies in further poverty research

UPPAP has shown itself to be particularly useful in identifying areas for future research and analysis, and monitoring, both by Government (the Poverty Monitoring Unit in particular) and by external stakeholders. The research agenda for the Poverty Monitoring Unit to improve further the understanding of poverty and appropriate policy responses will use a range of methodologies, including further participatory studies.

Follow up to ensure that policy relevant findings translate into real change

Ensuring that UPPAP findings do translate into real change will be a challenge for some time in Uganda. While some policy influence as a result of the UPPAP findings is evident, the UPPAP research has also shown that there is a gap between policy formulation and effective implementation in Uganda. Through systematic monitoring and production of bi-annual Poverty Status Reports, assessments will be made and challenges both for policy and its implementation will be identified for action by Government.

4.2 Linking participatory poverty assessments to policy and policymaking: experience from Vietnam

By Carrie Turk

4.2.1 Introduction

It is estimated that in the mid-1980's seven out of every ten Vietnamese were living in poverty. A little more than a decade later – a decade of reforms and rapid economic growth – the incidence of poverty has halved. Latest household survey data suggests that 37% of the population is now under the poverty line and 15% of the population is so poor that consumption is inadequate to meet nutritional needs. Social and other indicators have also improved significantly. But many of the newly non-poor households are still nearly poor, hovering close to the poverty line. Their vulnerability to shocks and crises coupled with the recent slowdown in economic growth means that the gains in poverty reduction cannot yet be considered robust.

1999 was an important year for poverty-related research and policy development in Vietnam. Household survey data from the second Vietnam Living Standards Survey (VLSS) had been collected by the General Statistics Office (GSO) the previous year and became available for analysis in 1999. In addition, four participatory poverty assessments (PPAs) were implemented in Vietnam during the year. *The Vietnam-Sweden Mountain Rural Development Programme*[57] carried out a PPA in two Districts of Lao Cai Province, an upland area with a high proportion of ethnic minorities living in remote villages. *ActionAid* coordinated a PPA in six Districts of Ha Tinh Province in the north central coastal region, a typhoon-prone area with very poor natural endowments. *Oxfam GB* carried out a PPA in two Districts of Tra Vinh Province, a coastal region with a large ethnic minority population and growing problems of landlessness. In Ho Chi Minh City, *Save the Children Fund (UK)* coordinated a study of three poor, urban Districts of Vietnam's most prosperous city.

This case study describes the work that took place collaboratively between Government agencies, donors and NGOs in implementing the PPAs. Although there has been a considerable amount of qualitative information on poverty produced in Vietnam over the past 8-10 years, it has rarely grabbed the attention of policymakers who have tended to view such information as 'unscientific' and lacking in credibility. By contrast, the PPAs implemented in 1999 have been widely circulated, used and quoted. It is possible to identify a number of factors that have profoundly influenced the potential to use this participatory research for both programme development and policy formulation. These include:

- Leadership and a significant commitment of resources – financial and other – by the World Bank, DFID and other donors;

- Excellent technical capacity and strong relationships with local communities and local authorities in the PPA agencies, combined with an eagerness to engage at the national policy level and to commit resources for this purpose;

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[57] The four agencies named here will be called the 'PPA study agencies' for the remainder of this case study.

- A strong emphasis on ensuring Government ownership of the PPAs through the mechanism of the Poverty Working Group (PWG); and,
- Timing the PPAs to precede strategic planning work within Government.

4.2.2 Policy and institutional context

National policy formulation

Poverty reduction and equitable growth are central and important goals of the Government of Vietnam. But the poverty that is often defined in planning and policy documents refers mostly to economic deprivation and limited access to social services. The phrase 'poverty reduction' is often equated to Government's Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction (HEPR) Programme, which is a framework of targeted support to groups defined as vulnerable or poor by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA). As such, poverty reduction is often seen more in terms of social safety nets rather than addressing constraints at the macro, structural and sectoral levels.

In theory, participation by poor households in the Government's planning process can take place through the role that the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) and the People's Councils play as their representatives. In some localities with active and consultative leadership, this may work well. In many places – and this was very clear from the PPA research – people rarely felt *informed* about the Government's plans, less still *consulted* during the formulation stage. Government recognises the need for greater transparency in its operations and there have been steps forward in the last few years. The national budget was recently published in summary form, for the first time ever, and Government has announced its intention to expand the publication of budget information. A recent decree stipulates actions which local leadership must take in order to promote grassroots democracy. This insists that communes (the lowest level of the administration in Government) must discuss their plans, budgets and expenditure with households and gain the agreement of the people to these initiatives. There is strong evidence that this decree has not yet been widely introduced. If consultations are not routinely taking place at the commune level, then the possibility of communicating needs and priorities up through the levels of Government to the national policymaking fora is extremely limited. Civil society is underdeveloped and does not yet play an active role in policy formulation.

Ensuring that the poverty diagnostic work included consultations with poor households is an important means of feeding their perspectives into planning processes. In the context of the PPAs implemented in 1999 in Vietnam, a number of factors were influential in determining the extent of this happening. Of these, timing the PPAs to coincide with Government's strategic planning process was one of the most important.

The timing of the PPAs could hardly have been better from the point of view of influencing policy. The PPAs were carried out in 1999 to feed into the new poverty assessment prepared at the end of that year. The poverty assessment was favourably timed to precede an important planning phase in Government. During 2000, the Communist Party of Vietnam prepared a draft socio-economic development strategy for the period 2001-2010. Line ministries within the Government of Vietnam have also been preparing sectoral ten-year strategies and five-year plans. The development path and priorities set out in these strategies will be discussed at the 9th Party Congress in early 2001. Other key activities that have taken place during 2000 and that have used information generated by the PPAs and/or the poverty assessment include the preparation of an interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP) and the implementation of a Public Expenditure Review.

Local policy formulation

In Vietnam, there is substantial room for manoeuvre for local authorities to define the local policy environment – some provinces are known to be more progressive than others because of the way in which they have interpreted central policies to promote growth at a local level. Others are identified as being more, often hampered also by the limited resources at their disposal. All provinces develop their own Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction plans, although the resource constraints often mean that this is restricted to implementing activities funded under the national HEPR. The local HEPRs are not generally based on strong analyses of the local causes and problems of poverty or of the important local constraints to inclusive, socio-economic development. There is a strong emphasis on collecting quantitative data to inform planning exercises but very little experience at the local level in conducting any kind of qualitative research which might broaden policies and programmes addressing the needs of the poor. The HEPR plays almost no role in forcing a stronger pro-poor agenda across Government agencies, either at the local or national level, and does not take up structural, macro or sectoral policy issues outside the realm of the targeted interventions.

At the local level, definitions of who is poor usually follow guidelines set in monthly per capita income terms by the MOLISA. There are also national definitions of vulnerable groups, which are not identified according to poverty criteria. These factors add up to local policies and programmes to reduce poverty that are often poorly targeted and are based on narrow definitions of poverty with a strong economic bias. Responses to poverty within the HEPR program overlook many non-material dimensions of poverty, such as social exclusion, limited access to decision-making and gender and ethnic inequities. The overwhelming majority of HEPR resources are allocated to subsidised lending operations through the Vietnam Bank for the Poor, which has a mixed record in reaching out to the poorest groups.

The PPA agencies were interested in demonstrating to their local authority partners the benefits of opening up direct lines of communication with poor households during the formulation of local policy. They were also keen to see that certain issues raised by poor households during the PPAs could be addressed at either a policy level or during the development of the Province's Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction plans.

4.2.3 The origins of the PPAs in Vietnam

World Bank plans a collaborative, participatory poverty assessment

Planning for the PPAs began well in advance of their implementation. The need for a new poverty assessment had been identified by the World Bank in its Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) in early 1998. The first poverty assessment, published by the World Bank in 1995, was based on household survey data collected in 1992/3. There was very limited use of qualitative information and little ownership of the analysis by either Government or the wider donor community. The CAS identified a need to do the second poverty assessment[58] differently. Importantly, the CAS specified:

◼ That the work would be done in partnership with central and local Government, with NGOs and with other donors and that there would be *one* poverty assessment which could serve the needs of all these groups;

◼ That the poverty assessment would incorporate qualitative/participatory approaches.

It was hoped that PPAs could be implemented in each of the seven regions of Vietnam, though this turned out to be overly ambitious given the timeframe and range of possible PPA partner agencies. UNDP and SIDA agreed at this early stage that they would collaborate in producing one single poverty assessment, which would reinforce the policy messages emerging from the analysis.

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[58] *Vietnam: Attacking Poverty*, Joint Report of the Government of Vietnam-Donor-NGO Poverty Working Group, December 1999

DFID initiates discussions and offers support to the World Bank

At the same time as the World Bank was drafting its CAS, UK DFID was seeking to strengthen their own understanding of poverty issues in Vietnam and was adamant that this should be done in partnership with others. This led to a joint agreement between DFID and the World Bank to work together on a poverty analysis which could influence poverty. DFID provided two poverty specialists, one quantitative and one qualitative, to act as a resource in this poverty analysis work. DFID also provided a trust fund to support the poverty work. The PPAs were therefore backed up by resources and funds that were unusually supportive and unconstrained. This support was fundamental to allowing the PPA research to be embedded within a wider process at pre-implementation, implementation and post-implementation phases, which in turn generated widespread buy-in to the findings within the donor community and across Government.

Some PPA-related activities already underway

In the meantime, one of the agencies who would subsequently emerge as a PPA partner agency – ActionAid Vietnam – had already received a request from its provincial Government partners in Ha Tinh Province to help with the development of a provincial HEPR plan. They had agreed to support the Province in this request by carrying out, in partnership, qualitative and quantitative studies in the Province. This research took place in summer 1998. A little later in October-November 1998, Save the Children (UK) ran a pilot PPA in Ho Chi Minh City, in part to refine a research plan for a larger PPA which could in turn inform their programme strategy in Ho Chi Minh City. At this stage, neither of these PPA initiatives were linked with broader donor objectives of producing a participatory poverty assessment.

Other PPA-partner agencies are sought out

Work then turned towards identifying suitable partner agencies to implement the PPAs. The World Bank, who was leading this exercise, approached NGOs and donors to discuss possible partnerships in carrying out the PPAs. The search for seven suitable partner agencies to implement PPAs in the seven regions involved meeting with more than 20 different NGOs to discuss their interest and capacity in carrying out the work. It was ultimately possible to identify only four partners who were able and willing to implement PPAs.

Many meetings and informal discussions took place before there was a firm commitment from the PPA agencies. This was the first time that the World Bank had worked so intensively with these particular partners in Vietnam and there was no immediate sense of trust or shared sense of purpose. The PPA agencies had many valid questions about the objectives of the exercise, the connection between the PPA research and their own plans, the impact that this might have on their relationships with local government partners and concerns over how the output of the PPAs would eventually be used. Ultimately, the PPA agencies were motivated to collaborate because:

■ (in some cases) they would have carried out similar participatory research in any case in order to inform their own research, programme or advocacy work;

■ the direct links with national (and global) policy-making provided a strong incentive.

The agencies that eventually carried out the PPA research all had a history of poverty reduction work in Vietnam and were keen to use their links with poor communities to inform national-level poverty analysis. Because the agencies either all had long term poverty alleviation programmes (or, in the case of Ho Chi Minh City, were planning to embark on such work) in the study sites, the PPAs were also important in generating very practical information which could contribute to programme design or local policy formulation. The fact that the PPA study teams had their own internal agency reasons for implementing a PPA was a great advantage. Their interest in producing high quality research which accurately reflected local conditions lay in taking their own programme and advocacy work forward rather than in satisfying the terms of a contract.

Government involved through the establishment of a Poverty Working Group

Though donors had agreed to collaborate and PPA partners had made a commitment there was still at this stage limited involvement of Government. In February 1999, the World Bank wrote to the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) outlining the intention to establish a *Poverty Working Group* (PWG). This outlined the donor and NGO membership (the World Bank, UNDP, SIDA, DFID and the four PPA partner agencies) and requested that 6 government agencies participate in the group. These were MPI, Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), General Statistics Office (GSO), Committee for Ethnic Minorities and Mountainous Affairs (CEMMA) and the Women's Union (WU). At the suggestion of MPI, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) and the State Bank of Vietnam (SBV) were added. MPI wrote to the other Government agencies asking them to nominate representatives. These agencies play an important role in Government's strategic planning exercises, and there was a helpful overlap between the membership of the PWG and the drafting teams of key Government plans and strategies.

The World Bank proposed to MPI that the poverty assessment should be a report of the Poverty Working Group, not just of the World Bank, and that it should be presented and debated at the Consultative Group (CG) meeting in December 1999.

The PWG played a powerful role in bringing the PPA research to the attention of Government policymakers. Many of the Government members joined the PWG highly sceptical of the value of PPAs and this was an important challenge for the PWG. The processes that surrounded the implementation of the PPAs – the workshops, the presentations, the meetings with local Government, the connections with the global Voices of the Poor exercise – were important in establishing the credibility of the research methodology and findings for these members. This was crucial, because the PPAs raised controversial and sensitive issues which Government could have chosen to ignore on the basis that the research was 'unreliable' (that is, non-quantitative).

One whole year of preparatory work

One year after the World Bank had started discussing the need for PPA research in the drafting stages of the CAS, all the key players at a national level had been engaged. Resources were available and a mechanism for collaboration was in place. By making the poverty assessment a joint product of the PWG and putting it on the CG meeting agenda to discussion, it was clear that central Government agencies would be taking a keen interest in the work.

This early planning stage therefore provided:

- Leadership by the World Bank, who took the initiative in organising, coordinating and designing the work.

- A strong commitment by the World Bank and other donors to using participatory information in the formulation of poverty reduction policy messages in the context of the poverty assessment

- A commitment of adequate resources for quantitative data collection, qualitative data collection and for a process which would involve key policymakers in the work

- A commitment to collaboration within the donor community

- A mechanism to involve Government through the Poverty Working Group and to generate Government ownership through the production of a *joint* report

- Early experiences in implementing PPAs

4.2.4 The design process

Techniques and methodology

In January 1999, the PPA partner agencies met together with the World Bank to discuss the scope of the research and appropriate methodology. At this time, it became clear that there was also an important opportunity to use the PPAs to contribute to the global 'Consultations with

the Poor' exercise coordinated by the World Bank as background research to the 2000/01 World Development Report on Poverty. PPA partner agencies agreed that they would like to link up with this global research and, without dictating the terms of the research, this had some influence over the way in which research was analysed and documented.

Although each PPA agency took responsibility for planning and undertaking the research in their respective site, it was agreed that all PPAs would use certain techniques and cover certain subject matter in order to facilitate the compilation of a national perspective. In reality, this was not a particular problem since there was a great deal of overlap in the information required for the PPA agencies' own agenda and the information which would most usefully influence the national and international exercises. Little in the way of methodology was 'imposed' on the teams. There was no set format for the PPA site reports, although it was agreed that the findings would be organised to facilitate comparability across sites. In practice this meant that the site reports were loosely structured around the format suggested in the process manual for the global Consultations with the Poor research.

The process of designing the studies was greatly facilitated by the institutional knowledge and experience of participatory techniques within the PPA study agencies. All of them have been using participatory techniques as a routine part of their programme planning and monitoring for many years. In terms of techniques and methodology, there was very little which was added from outside the pool of knowledge existing within these agencies themselves. All teams made use of a variety of techniques including:

- Focus group discussions;
- Semi-structured interviews;
- Wealth/wellbeing rankings
- Matrix and preference ranking and scoring;
- Flow diagrams;
- Institutional ranking and Venn diagrams.

All teams worked with groups of women separately. All teams also interviewed elderly people separately. Two teams made a point of working with children separately. Collectively the four PPAs engaged with more than 1000 households over the course of the studies.

4.2.5 Features of the implementation process

Main steps

The main steps surrounding the PPAs are listed below. It is clear that the *process* of implementing the PPAs was far more comprehensive than simply conducting some fieldwork, which covers the two shaded boxes out of more than 30 tasks listed in Table 6 below. It is this process which meant that findings would be relayed to policymakers and ensured that they would not be automatically dismissed as 'non-scientific'. This process was costly and sometimes messy, but made possible because of a clear sense of overall direction and commitments by various donors. Had the process been limited to the two shaded boxes, the link between the PPAs and policymaking would be hard to trace. It is estimated that the costs of implementing the PPAs – the cost of the shaded boxes below – totalled about $400,000[59] plus perhaps 3000 uncosted staff days on the part of the PPA agencies and their local authority partners[60]. This was embedded, however, in a process set out in the table below which cost, perhaps a further $500,000.

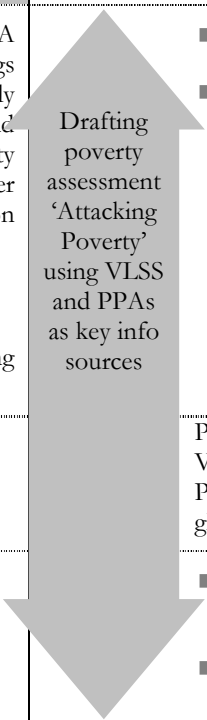[59] including WB staff costs and the costs of participating in the Voices of the Poor exercise.

[60] PPA agency uncosted staff time based on estimates from two PPA teams.

Table 6   Linking PPAs to policy development work

	PPA work	*Broader work which helped to link PPA work to national policy formulation*
1998	■ Funding for PPAs agreed with DFID ■ Early PPA work and pilot activities ■ Commitment by PPA partner agencies	■ Background work in planning the poverty assessment, securing donor commitment of resources and donor commitment to a shared poverty assessment ■ (and 1997) collection of household survey data (VLSS)
Jan 1999	WB and PPA partner agencies meet to discuss scope of research and methodology	Link to global 'Consultations of the Poor' research confirmed
Feb 1999	■ PPA partner agencies members of Poverty Working Group ■ World Bank travels to PPA study sites to request local authority permission for studies	Poverty Working Group established and workplan – including PPAs – agreed
March – April 1999	PPA research plans drawn up and discussed	March: first meeting of Poverty Working Group to discuss plans to produce poverty assessment based on quantitative (VLSS) data and qualitative (PPA) information
April – June 1999	Training, fieldwork, analysis and write-up	PWG meeting with presentations from some Government members
July – Sept 1999	■ Workshop in each of the PPA Provinces to feed back findings (attended by PWG members, especially central policymakers; provincial and district authorities; community representatives; PPA agencies; other agencies active in poverty reduction work in the area) ■ National synthesis report drafted ■ PPA site reports finalised, incorporating feedback from workshops	*Drafting poverty assessment 'Attacking Poverty' using VLSS and PPAs as key info sources* ■ Analysis of quantitative (VLSS) data ■ National synthesis report submitted to global 'Consultations with the Poor' research team
Sept 1999	National PPA synthesis report amended based on final site reports and feedback from the PWG	Presentation and discussion of PPA and VLSS findings to PWG – Participation by 3 PWG members at the Voice of the Poor global workshop
Oct – Nov 1999		■ PWG discusses and debates draft of poverty assessment ■ Changes made to draft to incorporate Government and donor comments
Dec 1999	■ Five PPA reports (4 site reports, one synthesis report) published, translated and disseminated widely ■ Many points presented during CG meeting drawn directly from the PPAs	■ 'Vietnam: Attacking Poverty' translated and approved by Government for distribution at the CG meeting. Published and circulated. ■ CG meeting held. Delegates endorsed 'Vietnam: Attacking Poverty' ■ PWG nominated by MPI to be collaborative forum responsible for helping Government produce a comprehensive poverty reduction plan

Table 6   cont'd

	PPA work	Broader work which helped to link PPA work to national policy formulation
Jan – Feb 2000		Government requests help with drawing up poverty reduction strategy. PWG agrees to structure work around this Government request.
March 2000		'Vietnam: Attacking Poverty' is distributed to all National Assembly members
April 2000		■ Government requests IMF to make a presentation on IMF and WB's requirements for a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) ■ PWG discusses macro-micro linkages and Public Expenditure Review
May 2000	■ Workshop held with PWG members, PPA partner agencies and local authorities to evaluate impact of the PPAs on different stakeholders and on policy and programmes ■ Government requests help in developing pared-down PPA guidelines/toolkits for local authorities to use in planning	PWG meets to discuss how framework proposed in 'Vietnam: Attacking Poverty' could be used to develop comprehensive poverty reduction plan
July 2000		Three day retreat to start work on Poverty Reduction Strategy with broad representation from GoV, donors and civil society
July – Dec 2000		PWG works with GoV to support the development of 10-year Poverty Reduction Strategy and 3-year Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy

Reducing the PPA fieldwork to two boxes is not to diminish the effort and resources that went into the PPA fieldwork. Within the shaded boxes in Table 4 lies a whole range of subtasks. These were central to producing good quality research which could be credible to local and national policy makers and which could be useful in informing both the poverty assessment and the development of the partner agencies' own work.

Table 7 overleaf presents the detailed activities that lie within the implementation stage. This is taken from the Lao Cai PPA, but the other PPA studies went through similarly iterative processes. The example shows how the process is broken down into three distinct phases – grounding, facilitating and validating – which roots the PPA research with local partners, increases ownership and improves the acceptability of findings at all levels. All four agencies were extremely busy with preparatory work, training, fieldwork, analysis and report writing for a 3-4 month period in 1999. In Ho Chi Minh City, SCF(UK) organised a pilot study to refine the research plan, extending the timeframe of the study. The longest exercise was in Ha Tinh. Here the decision to undertake a PPA in collaboration with local Government authorities was taken prior to any national-level initiatives. From start to finish, the PPA work in Ha Tinh stretched over one year.

Table 7   Grounding, facilitating & validating the PPA research[61]

Month	Village & Commune Level	District and province level	National / programme level
1 / 1999	**GROUNDING**	**Stage 2** Meeting with Province People's Committee to present the idea of jointly conducting the PPA. Consultation on objectives and selection of study locations etc.	**Stage 1** PPA study proposal prepared and multi-disciplinary PPA facilitation team formed
2 / 1999	**Stage 2b** Preparatory visits to 4 Commune People's Committees to discuss scope and purpose of the PPA and practical details.	**Stage 2a** Preparatory visits to 2 District People's Committees to discuss scope and purpose of the PPA and practical details.	
3 / 1999	**FACILITATING**	**Stage 4** 2nd preparatory visits to 2 districts to gather background data and conduct poverty assessment with district staff from different government sections	**Stage 3** Preparation of training guidelines
4 / 1999	**Stage 5** PPA field work training workshops In 2 district with mixed groups of district, Commune and village staff		
4- 5 / 1999	**Stage 5a** Conduct PPA exercises in 6 villages in 4 communes		
6 / 1999	**VALIDATING**	**Stage 6** Preparation of field reports, follow-up on missing data and preparation of draft report	
7 / 1999		**Stage 6a** Distribution of Draft PPA report to ALL province and district staff involved in the study	
8 / 1999	**Stage 6b** 2 day verification workshop with province, district, and commune staff to discuss the results. Adjustments made to report.		
9 /1999			**Stage 6c** Presentation and discussion of the PPA results at a number of national workshops.
10 /1999	**Stage 12** Presentation of Final Report		

61 *Field-based Learning and Training in Participatory Approaches to Rural Development: Ten Years Experience with PRA from the Vietnam-Sweden Cooperation Programme* by Edwin Shanks and Bui Dinh Toai, 2000, p96

Coordination and information-sharing

Though the PPAs were implemented by four separate agencies, the implementation phase was characterised by close co-operation and information sharing. Through workshops and informal meetings, the leaders of each PPA team were aware of what the other PPA teams were doing and how their studies were progressing.

Ensuring credibility

One of the most important tasks in making the PPA findings credible was to ensure, simply, that the research was of high quality. With one exception, agencies with longstanding partnerships with local authorities in the study sites carried out the PPAs. All the agencies have used participatory techniques as a routine part of the programme work in the PPA study area for a number of years. Their familiarity with the local area and environment meant that study teams were able to double-check findings which conflicted with other information. Other measures to ensure that findings would ultimately be taken seriously included: an emphasis on triangulation of findings in the field; including the viewpoints of local leadership and ensuring a good coverage (more than 1000 households in total across the four sites) of varying viewpoints to present a balanced picture.

Raising the profile

The provincial workshops were extremely important in establishing local Government support for the studies, for raising their interest in the findings and for addressing their queries and uneasiness with the research. Both the World Bank and the Poverty Working Group were important in this respect. World Bank meetings with local authorities at an early stage raised the profile of the studies at the local level and reinforced to local policymakers the fact that donors and central policymakers took participatory information seriously. All the PPA partners have commented on the ease with which local authorities granted permission to conduct the studies, once it became clear that the World Bank was involved.

The workshops at the end of the PPAs were often quite large – up to 100 participants attended. This was extremely valuable and the attendance of the PWG members and the World Bank was again important because:

■ It confirmed to local authorities that central policymakers and donors were taking this kind of information seriously

■ It demonstrated to central policymakers that the local policymakers and leaders were concurring with the research findings. It is more difficult for central policymakers to reject findings as one-off irregularities supported only by anecdotal evidence from a few households *if* local leaders are agreeing that these findings truly reflect the reality of poor households' lives.

■ It solidified the link between PPA findings and policy responses. Many issues came out of these workshops which were debated vigorously at a local level and then were taken up again at a national level. Examples include:

■ Constant concerns expressed by poor households that they lacked information on their entitlements, rights, and activities of local Government;

■ Clear evidence of inequities at the intra-household level, especially gender issues;

■ The multiple, interlocking disadvantages – economic and non-economic – which confront poor ethnic minority households;

■ A need to investigate the processes for levying fees and contributions at a commune level (raised by the Ha Tinh PPA and subsequently taken up in the PER);

■ A need to create a local policy environment conducive to the development of off-farm employment opportunities (raised in the Tra Vinh PPA and followed up with a focused study by the Mekong Project Development Facility)

■ A need to look again at the status of migrants (discussed vigorously in Ho Chi Minh City and raised in *'Vietnam: Attacking Poverty'* as a pressing issue).

No qualitative information has received this level of profile before in Vietnam, certainly at a national level. Many of these issues have been raised before in good quality participatory research on poverty, but the ability to bring the issues to national policymaking level has been very limited. Associating the PPAs with the work of the PWG and putting resources into a process which draws in local and central policy makers *and* major donors has important in drawing the link between findings and policymaking. The commitment shown by the World Bank and other members of the PWG in incorporating the PPA findings widely into *'Vietnam: Attacking Poverty'* has also brought the findings fully into the realm of policy debate.

4.2.6 Limitations of the design

There is near unanimous agreement on the PWG (and in the wider donor and Government community) that having the PPAs available to inform the national diagnosis of poverty has been extremely valuable and illuminating. There have been certain limitations to the usefulness, however:

■ The four PPAs were chosen to illustrate the problems of the poor in a range of different circumstances. Four studies are inadequate to capture some poverty situations, however. The Central Highlands is an extremely poor area with a particular set of problems that are overlooked by not having a PPA in this region;

■ Certain vulnerable groups were not really covered in depth in all PPAs (e.g. children) or at all in some PPAs (e.g. the disabled);

■ Many have commented that the information is not representative in any statistical sense. This is, of course, true. It worked very well to use the PPA information alongside nationally-representative household survey data. It is difficult to imagine how the PPAs might have been set in the national context effectively and convincingly *without* the household survey data. Attention often focuses on the value which qualitative data brings to the quantitative data. The experience in Vietnam suggests that the reverse is equally true;

■ Some have commented that the PPAs over-emphasise poverty and negative developments. The study teams did work with wealthier households also, but only with better-off households in the poor areas; and,

■ There were often problems with the institutional analysis. Both the standard Venn diagram exercises and the institutional rankings suggested in the Voices of the Poor process guide were unable to cut through the sensitivities inherent in this analysis.

Documenting findings for different needs

Research findings were gathered together to serve this variety of ends (see Figure 1). PPA study teams wrote up site reports for each district they visited (with the exception of the Lao Cai team, who jumped this step). From this, they drafted their local PPA synthesis reports. These reports, now published in both Vietnamese and English, have been circulated widely within the PPA provinces and nationally. They have served as a basis for local discussions on poverty, informed the programmes of local Government agencies and the PPA study agency, and raised issues of importance for local policy formulation.

The national synthesis report takes the four summary site reports and collates the findings. This stage in the process provided for comparative analysis at a national level, and integration with national policy processes. The synthesis report has been published in both Vietnamese and English and circulated widely.

Figure 1 shows the many levels of documentation that flowed from the PPAs. The bold arrows that direct the PPA analysis into the national poverty assessment mark the route that brought the PPA findings to the attention of national policymakers. The dotted line to the Voices of the Poor exercise has had a less direct impact at a national level, although the association with a high-profile international study has brought more credibility to the findings. The findings from Vietnam are used widely in the Voices of the Poor global studies.

Government comments and feedback (particularly local government) were taken into account in the final drafts of the PPA site synthesis reports. But central government involvement in drafting was really far more crucial in the national poverty assessment. Government has used this as a background document for some of its strategic planning work.

Figure 1   Feeding PPA findings into national documentation and plans
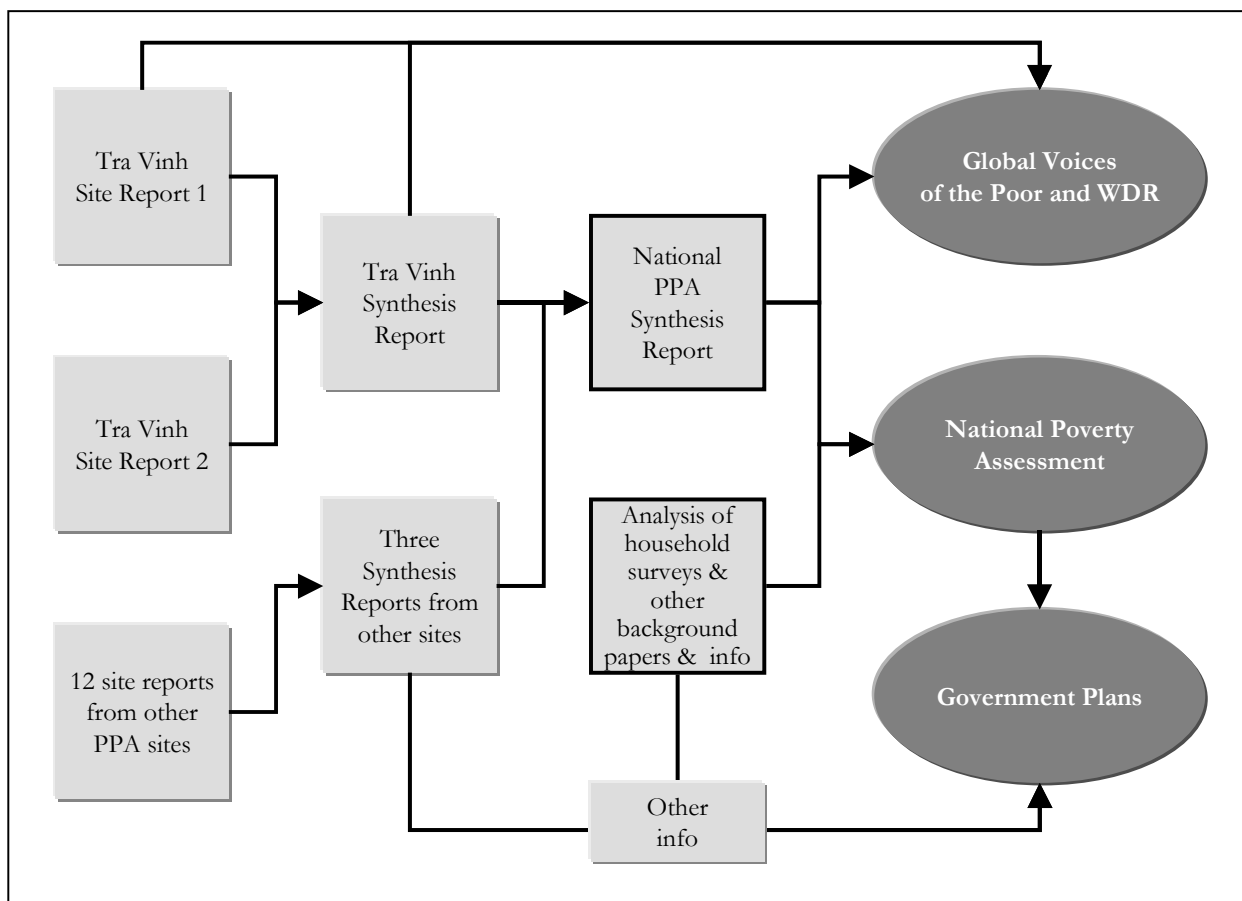
4.2.7 Findings and policy responses

Findings

Very specific findings vary from site to site, but there are a number of common themes that can be identified:

- A near-unanimous recognition that economic wellbeing in rural areas has improved over recent years;

- A strong demand for a greater range of opportunities to develop sustainable livelihoods, particularly those which reduce the dependence on landholdings of reducing size;

- A strong sense of vulnerability to both household-level and community level shocks, with ill health being the single most significant shock which poor households endure;

- Identification of a range of coping strategies which households use to deal with hardship and shock, many of which can be destabilising for poor households in the longer term;

- A voiced concern about the lack of information about initiatives, plans and programmes which affect their livelihoods and a sense of alienation from decision-making processes;

- A number of issues related to intra-household inequity which highlight the vulnerability of children and women;

- A range of gender-related dimensions of ill-being; and,

- A number of specific policy issues: the status of migrants; the role of the off-farm private sector in rural areas; the way in local fees and contributions are levied; the costs of healthcare and education; the limitations of current mechanisms to consult poor households; and, the limited outreach of formal safety nets

Policy responses: follow-up beyond the final report

Many would agree that most of these issues had been raised in various qualitative and/or quantitative studies over recent years. The difference here was that the research was embedded in an influential process, a process that involved many of the important agencies in local and national policymaking for poverty reduction. Though it is still early to have generated dramatic policy change, there are several examples of the PPAs feeding into policy debate in a substantive way.

Broadening the policy debate

A recent workshop of various stakeholders (including central and local policymakers) involved in the PPAs concluded that, for a number of reasons including the short time since the PPAs were implemented, the impact of the PPAs on *policymaking* had been greater than the influence on *policy* to date. The impact on policymaking has come about through:

- Shaping the public policy agenda, broadening the policy debate

- Elevating the status of qualitative research in national assessments of poverty and promoting bottom-up approaches to planning and policy-making

- Creating more places at the national policy-making table and ensuring that voices of all stakeholders are heard

- In addition, one group at the evaluation workshop reported that the PPA had given local levels of Government stronger grounds for identifying 'demands' and communicating them to a higher level and noted that the central level had learned more about realities at a local level.

An important first step to generating change lies in broadening the debates on policy. Previously seen as a narrow issue of hunger or income poverty, the PPAs have raised a number of topics which were not previously seen as part of poverty or which were too sensitive for frank and open debate. At the launch of *Vietnam: Attacking Poverty*, one official commented: '*Poverty might mean social or cultural gaps between people. It might mean lack of information, transportation, knowledge, and experience in dealing with hardships. It might mean severe vulnerability, so that health shocks or crop failure lead to a cycle of asset sales and indebtedness. It might mean not being able to influence the decisions that affect your livelihoods. Or it might mean being less advantaged within your own household.*' This represents a real shift in the definition of poverty.

The site reports and local-level workshops have sparked off this debate at a local level while the poverty assessment and the discussions at the CG meeting have really opened up the space for this debate at a national level. Examples of such topics include: how to bring households closer to decision-making processes, how to deal with their lack of information; the need to investigate policies and procedures around revenue-raising at a local level; the need to re-think the status of migrants; the need to look at equity issues within the households and across ethnic groups. Now that these topics are out in the open, in a published document that has the endorsement of Government, there is a sense of greater legitimacy in pursuing these topics in policy formation and programme design.

It is now eighteen months since the PPAs were published and first circulated. 'Vietnam: Attacking Poverty', the poverty assessment which provides a key link between the PPAs and policymaking, has been in the public domain for slightly less time. It is still quite early to expect major policy changes to be in place. There are encouraging signs that many of the PPA findings are filtering through the system and will lead to changes in the future. These early steps are collated in Table 8 below:

Table 8 How PPA findings might translate into policy changes

PPA findings	*Policy change in the making*
A strong demand for a greater range of opportunities to develop sustainable livelihoods, particularly those which reduce the dependence on landholdings of reducing size (all PPAs)	Study of constraints to the development of the off-farm sector in Tra Vinh (funded by World Bank and UNDP, conducted by Mekong Project Development Facility)
Marginalisation of ethnic minorities in upland areas (Lao Cai and Tra Vinh PPAs)	Study planned, funded by UNDP. To feed into an ethnic minority development plan
A strong sense of vulnerability to both household-level and community level shocks, with ill health being the single most significant shock which poor households endure	■ High costs of curative health care currently being looked at as part of the health sector review and the Public Expenditure Review ■ Government request to donors to work intensively to help develop a more integrated approach to dealing with community-wide shocks and disasters
A voiced concern about the lack of information about initiatives, plans and programmes which affect their livelihoods and a sense of alienation from decision-making processes	Lack of access by poor households to information on legal rights and 'knowledge of the poor' included by Government as an issue to be addressed in the poverty reduction strategy
Links between poverty and mechanisms for commune-level financing (Ha Tinh PPA)	Study on fees and voluntary contributions included in the Public Expenditure Review and discussed with Ministry of Finance
High direct costs of education for the poor	Currently being looked at as part of the Public Expenditure Review
■ A number of issues related to intra-household inequity which highlight the vulnerability of children and women ■ A range of gender-related dimensions of illbeing	Work by the Government-donor-NGO Gender strategy Working Group strongly informed by PPAs – process followed in producing 'Vietnam: Attacking Poverty' seen as a model for work this year in producing a gender strategy
The plight of unregistered urban migrants	In Ho Chi Minh City, some Districts have now changed the criteria for including long-settled unregistered migrants in its Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction credit programme
Various issues in Ha Tinh	Directly addressed in provincial policies and HEPR (including policies on commune-level fees and contributions, and public investment priorities)

Likely influence through the Government's plans and strategies

Following completion of the PPAs and the poverty assessment, Government has been drafting its overall socio-economic development strategy 2001-2010 and its sectoral 10-year strategies and 5-year plans. This includes a 10-year strategy for poverty reduction, which sets the strategic framework for a 5-year Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction Plan. In addition, the Government has also drafted a 3-year interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP),

which supports the Government of Vietnam's request for concessional funds from the IMF and World Bank. The PWG has provided a forum for Government-donor-NGO interaction and collaboration in these tasks. Government representatives on the PWG have a key role in drafting these strategies and are well-placed to incorporate the knowledge gained from implementing the PPAs. The I-PRSP, in particular, takes on board many of the issues and concerns raised by the PPAs. Although early drafts of the 10-year Poverty Reduction Strategy were disappointing in their limited reflection of the PPA findings, recent presentations by Government delegates at the CG meeting suggest that the most recent draft has absorbed many of the messages from the PPAs.

4.2.8 Wider impacts

Strengthening relationships

A very positive aspect of the work in 1999 was the opportunity it offered for agencies involved in poverty reduction to strengthen relationships and, in some cases, build new links. In particular, the following relationships have been built upon:

■ Links between members of the PWG: Government agencies, donors and NGOs;

■ Horizontal linkages across central Government agencies working towards poverty reduction;

■ Vertical linkages, from the local authorities up to central Government agencies;

■ Links between the PPA study agencies and their local authority partners – as one agency put it, collaboration on the PPA with their local partner has 'allowed them to participate in local policy dialogue at a more serious level';

■ Relationships between poor communities and other stakeholders by creating new opportunities for the poor to become more active partners in poverty alleviation; [62] and,

■ In some cases, links between local NGOs and/or research institutes hired to participate in the research and local authorities.

Changing attitudes

The recent workshop which evaluated the impact to date of the PPAs found that *all* stakeholders (i.e., poor communities; commune/ward, district, province, and central levels of Government; INGOs; and donors) have experienced significant changes in knowledge, understanding, and attitudes in one or more of the following areas:

■ the nature and causes of poverty;

■ greater solidarity with or sympathy for the poor;

■ increased commitment to consulting the poor;

■ better understanding of and/or increased commitment to participatory or 'bottom-up' research, planning, and monitoring;

■ better understanding of local conditions;

■ recognition that inequities were important at the household level, particularly gender-based issues;

■ greater willingness to acknowledge sensitive issues, such as domestic violence or marginalisation of some social groups;

■ increased demand for better social services and programmes; and

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[62] This was articulated strongly by 4 out of 5 small groups at the workshop that evaluated the impact of the PPAs. There were no representatives from poor communities at the workshop, but there were representatives from the commune level upwards.

- increased commitment to/demand for participation and grass roots democracy

Of the many reservations expressed by Government agencies about the use of PPAs in poverty diagnostics, some remain. In particular, the authorities are concerned about the scope for extrapolating a general statement or trend from a few non-representative interviews. That said, many Government representatives have been interested by the findings and have been able to see the value they add to the quantitative analysis. Seeing that donors take the findings seriously – very clear at the CG meeting – helps to inspire confidence in the techniques.

Impact on the PPA agencies

The PPA agencies have noted a number of ways – positive and negative- in which the PPAs and their collaboration in the broader process has influenced their work. These include:

- The PPAs demanded significant resources, which were diverted from other tasks;

- The tight timeframe, which the broader process placed on the implementation of the PPAs, has limited the usefulness of the findings for the PPA agencies own purposes and restricted the capacity-building gains from the exercise;

- It was an important team-building exercise;

- It improved relationships with local NGOs and research organisations who were hired to help with the studies;

- Collaboration with the World Bank in particular and association with the PWG in general has enhanced the credibility of the PPA agencies and their work in the eyes of local authority partners;

- This in turn has allowed the PPA agencies to have greater influence over provincial policymaking than previously;

- The process of collaborating improved PPA agency understanding of how the World Bank and central levels of Government operate;

- There have been a number of programme developments linked directly to the PPAs including:

  - The Lao Cai PPA has given impetus to decentralization under MRDP's Agricultural Development Programme, allowing districts, communes, and villages some discretion in deciding how to spend budgetary allocations. MRDP's Health Programme will use PPA methods for village-level planning, and well-being rankings have replaced wealth rankings in programme monitoring.

  - In response to PPA findings, ActionAid has developed new initiatives to address gender inequities in rural areas.

  - Based in part on PPA findings, Oxfam GB has developed a credit project in Tra Vinh Province and a regional plan for Duyen Hai District.

  - Based in part on PPA findings, SCF is developing a new urban child rights programme in Ho Chi Minh City.

  - PPA findings have also informed the development of interventions under a CARE project to assist migrants in Ho Chi Minh City.

Impact on the World Bank in Vietnam

Coordinating the PPAs and the process that brought them to the policy level absorbed a significant amount of staff time within the World Bank. The output has been used in programme formulation in a very active way. The Lao Cai PPA is feeding very directly into the Northern Mountains Poverty Reduction Project, which is currently under formulation. The Ha Tinh PPA led to modification in the scope of the Public Expenditure Review and resulting discussions with the Ministry of Finance on the issue of fees and voluntary contributions. The Tra Vinh PPA has led to a commitment of funds for a study on the development of the off-farm private sector. The Ho Chi Minh City PPA has fuelled plans to re-direct the urban sector plans to include a slum upgrading programme.

There has been greater acceptance of the usefulness of qualitative information, which has been reinforced by the success of the poverty assessment 'Vietnam: Attacking Poverty'.

A remaining challenge: institutionalising participatory methods

Few are now disputing the value that the PPAs have brought to the poverty diagnosis work or to the planning activities, which build on the diagnosis. The question that now arises is the longer-term role for participatory information in future planning and policy work. The PPAs were highly valuable, but also expensive. Some Government agencies have expressed a desire to integrate participatory methods into their work – MOLISA for example is asking for help in developing a streamlined toolkit of participatory methods which could be useful in targeting poor households, informing their programme and monitoring the impact of their activities. Greater openness and transparency by Government, improved information flows, a more vibrant and vocal civil society will all be necessary to create an environment where participatory methods will work.

With regards to poverty reduction, this planning phase presents two clear challenges for Government and its donor and NGO supporters. The first is to ensure that the overall development plans and direction are compatible with those needed to generate equitable, permanent and sustainable improvements in living standards for the poor. The second is to ensure that both the overall plans and Government's strategy for the HEPR, a programme of targeted support to the poor which is a very specific component of the overall plan, are as rooted in the realities of poor households lives as possible.

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Annex 1

Abstracts of selected texts on PPAs

The following abstracts were mostly prepared by Karen Brock through the work of the IDS participation group. They have been selected to fit the following criteria: publicly available through electronic or conventional distribution; providing a clear and relatively concise illustration of key issues in the theory and practice of PPAs. This is not intended to be a comprehensive listing of all sources on PPAs, and many significant texts (including most PPA reports) are not easily available and therefore excluded. It is hoped, however, that by using the summaries which follow the reader could selectively access a range of materials covering key issues and debates.

H. Attwood

PRA training report, Hlabisa

Data Research Africa, South Africa, unpublished training resource

1995, 69pp

Available from: participation@ids.ac.uk

Or mail: Participation Resource Room, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton. BN1 9RE, UK.

Tel: +44(0) 1273 877263

Fax:+44(0) 1273 621202

Report of a PRA training undertaken in response to request from the organisations involved in the South Africa PPA. The report was written to provide participants with an output on the process and content of the training, to open the process of training to critique from other trainers, and to share ideas on training. The report offers a day-by-day account of the training, which while it introduces the basic elements and methods of PRA, also has a strong emphasis on attitudes, behaviour, biases, gender and team roles. Three days field exercises are also documented.

A.Norton, T.Stephens

Participation in Poverty Assessments

Social Policy and Resettlement Division Discussion Paper

June 1995, 27pp

Available from: http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/sourcebook/sba202.htm

Paper examining the role of participation in World Bank Poverty Assessments. The authors emphasise the importance of participation both in understanding the dynamics of poverty from the perspectives of poor people, and in gaining the allegiance of those consulted for the proposed solutions which result. They discuss participation in the context of two major stakeholders, defined as *primary* (the poor) and *institutional* (key stakeholders in government and civil society).

The section on *primary* stakeholders discusses the relationship between different kinds of methodological combinations and the level of participation, as well as addressing several issues of research design, and examining the uses and applications of PPA methodologies and some of their limitations. The section on *institutional* stakeholders discusses the definition of the research agenda, undertaking of analytic work, formulation of policy and dissemination of results.

UNDP

A pro-poor agenda: Report on Human Development in Bangladesh 1996

Part 3: Poor people's perspectives

1996, 106pp

Available from: Mr. Shams Mustafa at Email address: shams.mustafa@undp.org

Fax: 880 2 8113196

Report of research findings from UNDP funded PPA in Bangladesh, which aims to present the perspectives of the poor on the analysis and prioritisation of their own problems, and the identification of their future expectations from Government, non-Government and private sector agencies.

The report is structured firstly around poor people's analysis and ranking of their problems, which have been aggregated using statistical indexing. Findings are clearly disaggregated by gender and frequently discussed from a gendered perspective. Secondly, poor people's analyses of institutions are presented: these include the finding that 20% of the villages and slums visited were totally unaware of any Government services. Participants identify and discuss a wide range of areas in which they think Government should take responsibility: provision of health, education and credit, enforcement of dowry and land tenure law, and employment creation.

S.Carvalho, H. White

Combining the quantitative and qualitative approaches to poverty measurement and analysis: the practice and the potential

World Bank Technical Paper 366, 26pp

May 1997

Order publication from the World Bank: ISBN 0-8213-3955-9

http://www.worldbank.org/html/extpb/ordform/onlineorderform.htm

Or mail: The World Bank, P.O. Box 960, Herndon, VA 20172-0960, U.S.A.

Phone: 1-703-661-1580

Fax: 1-703-661-1501

This paper highlights the key characteristics of the quantitative and qualitative approaches to poverty measurement and analysis, examines the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, and analyses the potential for combining the two approaches in analytical work on poverty. The main conclusion of this paper is that sole reliance on either only the quantitative approach or only the qualitative approach is often likely to be less desirable than combining the two approaches.

The paper looks at the differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches in several key areas: defining poverty, sampling, data collection methods and instruments. It goes on to examine the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, before looking at how qualitative and quantitative methods might be combined.

J.Gaventa

Synthesising PRA and case study materials: a participatory process for developing outlines, concepts and overview reports.

Draft unpublished documentation from Report Writing Workshop, Shinyanga Region, Tanzania

September 1997, 11pp

Available from: participation@ids.ac.uk

Or mail: Participation Resource Room, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton. BN1 9RE.UK.

This short piece describes an inductive method, based on card sorting, used for synthesising information from 8 village level participatory poverty assessments conducted in Shinyanga Region, Tanzania, 1997. The method was adapted by facilitators from those used in the SAPPA and during the process of an Empowerment Program in the USA.

A process is outlined whereby a team of 18 people, nearly all of whom were involved in fieldwork and who included local government officials, developed a detailed outline for a synthesis report, and coded

and indexed 8 village fieldwork reports to allow a team of writers to continue the work. The account is laid out to present in parallel the Workshop Process and the Facilitators' Comments on the process.

D. Booth, J. Holland, J. Hentschel, P. Lanjouw, A. Herbert

Participation and Combined Methods in African Poverty Assessment: renewing the agenda

Department for International Development Issues Paper, Social Development Division and Africa Division

February 1998, 127pp

Available from: http://www.dfid.gov.uk/public/what/advisory/group7/pdf/sddafpov.pdf

This report has to objective to 'contribute to the wider adoption of participatory principles and combined methods in poverty assessment work, by illustrating more fully the added value to be derived from these approaches.'

The first section outlines three distinct elements in making the case for participation and combined methods in poverty assessment: stakeholder involvement, the meaning of poverty and the views of the poor, and triangulation and the limits of single-stranded approaches. It outlines an evolving agenda for poverty assessment work in Africa: promoting stakeholder ownership, strengthening the rang of contextual and non-contextual methods and how best to move from improvement of the poverty profile to the advancements of explanations.

The body of the report is supported by five substantial annexes which look at different elements of the agenda outlined: contextual and non-contextual methods in the construction of poverty profiles, integrating contextual and non-contextual methods, themes from the PPAs, understanding the dimensions of poverty in Zambia, and understanding the dimensions of poverty in rural Tanzania. The latter annexes re-analyse the data from the two PPAs within an assets framework, and are strongly gendered.

C. Bailhache, U. Grant, M. Greeley, A. Kirundi, N. Lebrun, G. Pratt, I. Yaschine-Arroyo

Human Development Report, Shinyanga Region, Tanzania: a synopsis

Unpublished synopsis of PPA research

March 1998, 23pp

Available from: participation@ids.ac.uk

Or mail: Participation Resource Room, IDS, University of Sussex, Brighton. BN1 9RE.

Tel: +44(0) 1273 877263

Fax:+44(0) 1273 621202

This short report, prepared for the UNDP report on Poverty in Africa from the results of the Shinyanga PPA, outlines lessons from that process in the areas of methodology and findings of processes of poverty and processes of change. The Shinyanga PPA, funded by UNDP, was part of a project on decentralised poverty eradication initiatives, and aimed to build local capacity in participatory action research, and to plan for the formulation of a regional poverty eradication action plan.

T. Fujikura, M. Bhattarai, A. Bhattarai

Review of Participatory Poverty Analysis Report

Unpublished, submitted to ActionAid Nepal

May 1998, 23pp

Available from: participation@ids.ac.uk

Participation Resource Room, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton. BN1 9RE.UK.

Tel: +44(0) 1273 877263

Fax:+44(0) 1273 621202

This report describes participatory poverty assessment activities carried out by three NGOs in eleven districts of Nepal in 1998, with the stated objective of finding out poor people's perspectives on poverty and the impacts of policies on their lives. The purpose of the study was explained to one group of poor

people 'not to write a report in the sense that they knew, but to press the authorities to work with and for the poor to reduce poverty.'

The authors go into some detail about how they approached the question of finding poor people, and some of the contradictions inherent in trying to contact, for example, street children. They outline their findings on the diversity of perceptions of poverty amongst the different groups of poor and non-poor that they identify. Other findings are outlined, concerning landlessness, inflation, 'natural' disasters, education, cultural practices, seasonality and downward mobility.

P.Shaffer

Who's 'poor?' Comparing household survey and participatory poverty assessment results from the Republic of Guinea

Unpublished paper for IDS Poverty Research Programme international conference 'What can be done about poverty?'

July 1998, 24pp

Available from: Paul Shaffer, 4 Normanna Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6C 1H2

Paul Shaffer@utoronto.ca

Sections also appear as: World Development Vol.26, No.12, 1998 pp2119-2135

This article presents findings on gender and consumption poverty taken from household surveys and Participatory Poverty Assessments in the Republic of Guinea. National household survey data reveal that women are not more likely than men to be consumption poor or to suffer greater consumption poverty. PPA data from the village of Kamatiguia reveal that women are 'worse off' than men when deprivations includes excessive workload and reduced decision-making authority.

Through looking at findings on the poverty status of women headed households, female representation in poor households and the intrahousehold distribution of food and health care, the paper seeks to analyse the relation ship between gender and consumption poverty. As well as presenting the findings from household survey data, the author presents an account of how focus group discussions and wellbeing ranking were used to address these questions. Category and selectivity bias are discussed with reference to the PPA findings. The conclusion of the paper is that according to quantitative household survey data on consumption poverty, women are better off than men, but that according to PPA data, the whole concept of consumption poverty misses critical elements of women's deprivation. This in itself supports the conclusion that 'the equity import of policy interventions based *exclusively* on consumption poverty is limited indeed.'

M.Brocklesby, J. Holland

Participatory Poverty Assessments and Public Services: Key messages from the poor

DFID Social Development Division report

September 1998, 31pp

ISBN 1-86192-087-3

Order publication by email from: enquiry@dfid.gtnet.gov.uk

By mail: Public Enquiry Point, Department for International Development, Abercrombie House, Eaglesham Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 8EA

Tel: 44(0) 1355 84 3132

Fax: 44(0) 1355 84 3632

This report focuses specifically on the 'range of opinions, concerns and demands of the poor regarding public services provision' reported in PPAs conducted by the World Bank and others since 1990. The authors briefly introduce the rationale of PPAs, emphasising that in their understanding, a PPA is both a process and a product. They review PPA findings on local conceptualisations of poverty, before focusing on public service provision.

The authors argue that PPA findings have provided a number of critical issues for further public service analysis, and that many of these are linked to 'securing equity of access to improved quality and contextually relevant services, and to ensuring poverty reduction and livelihood security.' The key issues they discuss, with examples from a range of PPAs, are financial barriers to access, ensuring physical access, social, cultural and political constraints, quality of service, and improving participation in public policy making. In conclusion, they suggest that 'the most powerful message to emerge is their [*the poor*}

desire to be self-reliant. Public sector assistance is views as important but not a substitute for their own efforts and initiatives in breaking the cycle of poverty.

A.Whitehead, M. Lockwood

Gender in the World Bank's Poverty Assessments: six cases from sub-Saharan Africa

Draft of paper, published in Development and Change, 30(3), July 1999 pp525-555

November 1998, 54pp

Available on-line at:

http://www.blackwellpublishers.co.uk/asp/journal.asp?ref=0012-155X&src=ard&aid=128&iid=3&vid=30

This paper examines the role of gender in six World Bank Poverty Assessments in Ghana, Zambia, Tanzania and Uganda (three of these PAs had a PPA component). The authors look at how and why gender appears in these poverty assessments, and links emerging points about gender within the World Bank to broader questions of approaches to poverty, methodology and policy. The most common way women appear in the Assessments under review is in the guise of female headed households. Aside from this, the authors find that gender sensitivity in the PAs under review varies widely.

Section Five looks at gender in the PPA components of the PAs under review. It examines the methods used in the PPAs, their influence on the outcomes of the Poverty Assessments, and the question of whether or not PPAs improve gender analysis. It concludes, that for the PPAs under review, this is not the case. This is partly due to the marginalisation of PPA findings within PAs but is also due to 'serious shortcomings in the theory and practice of participatory methodologies.'

T.Dogbe

'The one who rides the donkey does not know the ground is hot': CEDEP's involvement in the Ghana PPA

(ed) J. Holland, J. Blackburn, Whose voice? Participatory research and policy change

IT Publications

1998, 6pp

Available from: Information Technology Publications Ltd, 103-105 Southampton Rd

London WC1B 4HH

Email: orders@itpubs.org.uk

This short piece discusses a series of participatory poverty assessments conducted in Ghana in 1993 and 1994. One of the researchers involved in the PPAs outlines some of the key areas of learning, highlighting issues of process, such as the importance of 'handing over the stick' and interacting face-to-face with poor people. He discusses some of the strengths and weaknesses of the Ghana PPA, and the early indications of influence on policy.

D.Owen

Whose PPA is this? Lessons learned from the Mozambique PPA

(ed) J. Holland, J. Blackburn, Whose voice? Participatory research and policy change, IT Publications

1998, 7pp

Available from: Intermediate Technology Publications Ltd, 103-105 Southampton Rd

London WC1B 4HH

Tel: +44 (0) 436 9761

Fax: +44 (0) 436 2013

Email: orders@itpubs.org.uk

This critical reflection of lessons learned from the 1995 Mozambique PPA suggests that the process of carrying out a PPA is as significant as the product, in terms of quality and effectiveness. It outlines the objectives and planning of the PPA, before suggesting that national ownership of a PPA process is an important part of effective policy influence, and concludes that 'different stakeholders expect different

kinds of information from the PPA, with implications for the ownership of the process…Multiple stakeholders create multiple policy demands.'

H. Attwood, J. May

Kicking down doors and lighting fires: the South African PPA

(ed) J. Holland, J. Blackburn, <u>Whose voice? Participatory research and policy change</u>

IT Publications

1998, 12pp

Available from: Intermediate Technology Publications Ltd, 103-105 Southampton Rd

London WC1B 4HH

Tel: +44 (0) 436 9761

Fax: +44 (0) 436 2013

Email: orders@itpubs.org.uk

This account documents the process of the 1995/6 South Africa PPA, focusing first on the design of the research – how it was undertaken, who controlled the process and which issues were chosen for focus. It continues to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the PPA process, and examines some of the issues which proved important for moving from empowerment at the community level to meeting policy objectives.

A.Norton

Analysing participatory research for policy change

<u>(ed) J. Holland, J. Blackburn, Whose voice? Participatory research and policy change</u>

IT Publications

1998, 11pp

Available from: Intermediate Technology Publications Ltd, 103-105 Southampton Rd

London WC1B 4HH

Tel: +44 (0) 436 9761

Fax: +44 (0) 436 2013

Email: orders@itpubs.org.uk

This paper aims to share some of the experiences gained during work on the PPAs in Zambia, South Africa and Ghana. The introduction deals with conceptual and ethical issues, particularly questions of power, authority and control in the relationships between researchers and participants. The process of analysing research generated through participatory methods is discussed with reference to several stages of the research process: preparation, analysis and reporting in the field, policy analysis of findings, social analysis, and the dangers of making assumptions. The author concludes by emphasising the importance of keeping the language and methods of analysis accessible to the widest possible range of participants.

World Bank Resident Mission, Hanoi

A Synthesis of Participatory Poverty Assessments from four sites

Compilation reports of the Vietnam PPAs as a submission to the Consultations with the Poor process

September 1999, 85pp

Available from: http://www.worldbank.org.vn/rep5/voc001.htm

This report presents a synthesis of findings from the Vietnam PPA, co-funded by the World Bank but organised and conducted by four NGOs. The PPA was designed to complement the statistical data generated by a national household survey, by providing helping to explain trends emerging from the statistical analysis and providing information on issues to do with poverty not covered by the survey, with the aim of a deeper and more representative analysis of poverty. The NGO partners, all of whom have ongoing poverty alleviation programmes, worked closely with local government officials, and there was a strong capacity building component to the work.

The report presents a range of findings on understanding wellbeing and illbeing, vulnerability and coping, institutional analysis, gender relations and problems and priorities of poor households

C. Robb

Can the poor influence policy? Participatory Poverty Assessments in the Developing World

World Bank 'Directions in Development'

1999, 128pp

Available from: http://www.worldbank.org/html/extpb/canpoor.htm

This book summarises the World Bank's experience with PPAs up until 1998. It defines PPAs and examines their impact on deepening understanding of poverty, influencing policy and strengthening policy implementation. The author looks at emerging good practice and possible future directions. She concludes that 'PPAs are highlighting the potentially powerful role the poor can play in analysing poverty, developing interventions for its reduction, and assessing the impact of projects and policies. The challenge for the Bank and the rest of the development community is to effectively integrate the perspectives and values of the poor into the process of policy and project formulation and implementation.'

R. McGee

Analysis of Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) and household survey findings on poverty trends in Uganda

Unpublished report of a mission to Uganda

February 2000, 33pp

Available from: Mr Leonard Okello at UPPAP on okello@uPPAp.or.ug

Also see Internet site: http://www.uPPAp.or.ug/

This report discusses the findings of analytical work on poverty in Uganda, undertaken using both quantitative measures and participatory approaches to data-gathering and analysis, and giving apparently different results. While quantitative measures seemed to indicate that poverty is declining, participatory approaches revealed that many local people perceived it to be increasing.

The author argues that the two sets of findings do not contradict one another, because they are not comparable, being based on different dimensions of poverty, different assumptions on the relationship between household consumption and poverty, different samples, and different time reference periods. She asserts however that some of the results are compatible, particularly in the areas of purchasing power, certain types of increased expenditure and food security. In conclusion, she writes 'this analysis has highlighted a need for greater precision in the use of poverty-related terminology in Uganda in future. Since poverty is now understood to be a wide gamut of deprivations ranging from voicelessness and exposure to violence, right through to consumption shortfall, confusion could be avoided if consumption data were henceforth referred to as consumption data rather than 'poverty data', and the term 'poverty data' reserved for the whole broad range of information – qualitative and quantitative – which it is now known to encompass.'

J. Milimo, T.Shillito, K.Brock

'Who would ever listen to the poor': findings from participatory research on poverty in Zambia, 1991 – 99

Unpublished draft book manuscript

February 2000,118pp

Available from: Participatory Assessment Group, 234/6 UN Avenue, PO Box 51080, Lusaka, Zambia

John Milimo by email at: pagzam@zamnet.zm

This book summarises findings from a decade of participatory research on poverty in Zambia, including the 1993 PPA and a series of poverty monitoring exercises which were undertaken to update the PPA for policy and planning purposes.

The book briefly discusses the evolution of participatory research in Zambia and outlines the tools and methods used to carry out the study. It summarises findings about livelihoods, health, education and institutions and organisations. A concluding chapter highlights lessons for policy formulation, the

decentralisation of service provision, contributions to the National Poverty Reduction strategy and the participatory approach.

M.Masaiganah, J. William, H. Malyunga, K.Mwamwaja

Participatory Poverty Assessment: Report for Kiteto and Singida districts

Unpublished report prepared for Kiteto and Singida District Councils

February 2000

Available from: masaigana@africaonline.co.tz

Mail: M. Masaiganah, Mwasama Primary School, Box No 240, Bagamoyo, Tanzania

Tel: +255 52 44062

The report traces the process and findings of a District level PPA, supported by SIDA, and involving an NGO with an ongoing land management project in the area. The author describes the process as building on the lessons of the Shinyanga PPA, and outlines the objectives as providing background experience on developing poverty reduction processes through participatory approaches leading to participatory planning, and to train District staff to carry out a PPA process.

The report outlines the findings of the study on local perceptions of poverty and livelihoods, and describes the process and outcomes of the first stage in the planning process, including examples of problem analysis diagrams.

R. McGee with A.Norton

Participation in poverty reduction strategies: a synthesis of experience with participatory approaches to policy design, implementation and monitoring

IDS Working Paper 109

May 2000, 80pp

Available from: IDS Publications Office, IDS, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE

Tel: 44 (0) 1273 678269

Fax: 44(0) 12713 691 647 or 621202

Email: ids.books@sussex.ac.uk

Website: http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/publicat

The purpose of this synthesis is to review experience in applying participatory approaches to processes of policy formulation at the macro level, with a view to informing the formulation of Participatory Reduction Strategy Papers, a policy instrument recently introduced by the World Bank and IMF to ensure the link between debt relief and poverty reduction. The paper maps out the PRSP process and discusses the paradox of country ownership of such processes, before reviewing experience to date in terms of information-sharing through participatory generation of knowledge, influencing policy through participatory processes, and increasing the accountability of governments.

PPAs are discussed both as part of the process of information generation, and in terms of their role influencing policy. Text boxes provide information on the Uganda and Vietnam processes. The author argues that these 'second generation' PPAs are distinguished by having policy influence as an inherent part of their design.

D. Narayan, R. Patel, K. Schafft, A. Rademacher, S. Koch-Shulte,

Voices of the poor: Can anyone hear us?

A co-publication from World Bank and Oxford University Press

2000, 343pp

ISBN 0-19-521601-6

Available from: http://www.worldbank.org/html/extpb/ordform/onlineorderform.htm

Mail: The World Bank, PO Box 960, Herndon, VA 20172-0960, USA

Phone: 1703 661 1580

Fax: 1703 661 1501

This book reviews the findings of 81 World Bank PPAs, offering 'a view of the world from the perspective of the poor.' It focuses on the common patterns of poor people's experiences in terms of defining poverty, state and civil society institutions, changing gender relations, and social fragmentation.

The analysis presented in the book results in five main conclusions: poverty is multidimensional; the State has been largely ineffective in reaching the poor; the role of NGOs in the lives of the poor is limited, and the poor depend primarily on their own networks; households are crumbling under the stresses of poverty, and that the social fabric is unravelling. The recommendations for strategic change that arise from these conclusions are: to start with poor people's realities, to invest in the organisational capacity of the poor, to change social norms and to support development entrepreneurs.

D. Narayan, R. Chambers, M. Shaha, P. Petesch

Voices of the poor: crying out for change

World Bank & Oxford University Press

2000, 314pp

Available from: The World Bank, PO Box 960 Hendon VA 20172-0960 USA

Phone 1 703 661 1580

This book summarises the findings of a 23-country study carried out as part of the programme of background work contributing to the World Bank's WDR 2000/01 Attacking Poverty. The book summarises results in the following areas: how poor people understand wellbeing and illbeing; livelihoods; places of the poor; the body; gender relations; social illbeing; insecurity; institutions; governance; powerlessness. The authors argue that the material comprises a 'call to action' for institutional and personal action and change.

K. Brock

Particpatory Poverty Assessment Information Pack

Institute of Development Studies

August 2000

39pp

For electronic copy see http://www.ids.ac.uk/particip

For hard copy contact Jane Stevens j.stevens@ids.ac.uk

This information pack is in two parts. Together, these aim to provide a guide to the basic facts about PPAs, and signposts to where the reader can follow up on documents.

The first part is a short paper which provides an overview of PPAs. It addresses different definitions of PPAs, their origins and development, questions around process and method, impact and spread, critical reflections, and a discussion of possible future paths for PPAs. The second part consists of abstracts of written material about PPAs, with details of availability.

K. Brock and R.McGee (eds)

Learning from the Poor? Critical Reflections on information, knowledge and policy

Forthcoming 2001. Chapter manuscripts available from Institute of Development Studies

This book provides a wide-ranging review of the theoretical, methodological and ethical issues involved in participatory research in policy environments. Different chapters include critical reflections on the 'Voices of the Poor' exercise by participants, a review of the potential for enhancing dimensions of PPAs which relate to processes of personal change, and a review of the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Process.