VOICES OF THE POOR

Can Anyone

Hear Us?

"My colleagues and I decided that in order to map our own course for the future, we needed to know about our clients as individuals. We launched a study entitled 'Voices of the Poor' and spoke to them about their hopes, their aspirations, their realities.

What is it that the poor reply when asked what might make the greatest difference in their lives? They say, organizations of their own so that they may negotiate with government, with traders, and with nongovernmental organizations. Direct assistance through community-driven programs so that they may shape their own destinies. Local ownership of funds, so that they may put a stop to corruption. They want nongovernmental organizations and governments to be accountable to them....

These are strong voices, voices of dignity."

—James D. Wolfensohn, President, the World Bank Group
Address to the Annual Meeting of the Board
of Governors, September 28, 1999

VOICES OF THE POOR
Can Anyone Hear Us?

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Contents

Foreword

This book is the first in a three-part series entitled *Voices of the Poor.* The series is based on an unprecedented effort to gather the views, experiences, and aspirations of more than 60,000 poor men and women from 60 countries. The work was undertaken for the *World Development Report 2000/2001* on the theme of poverty and development.

Can Anyone Hear Us? brings together the voices of over 40,000 poor people from 50 countries. The two books that follow, *Crying Out for Change* and *From Many Lands,* pull together new fieldwork conducted in 1999 in 23 countries. The Voices of the Poor project is different from all other large-scale poverty studies. Using participatory and qualitative research methods, the study presents very directly, through poor people's own voices, the realities of their lives. How do poor people view poverty and well-being? What are their problems and priorities? What is their experience with the institutions of the state, markets, and civil society? How are gender relations faring within households and communities? We want to thank the project team led by Deepa Narayan of the Poverty Group in the World Bank, and particularly the country research teams, for undertaking this work.

What poor people share with us is sobering. A majority of them feel they are worse off and more insecure than in the past. Poor people care about many of the same things all of us care about: happiness, family, children, livelihood, peace, security, safety, dignity, and respect. Poor people's descriptions of encounters with a range of institutions call out for all of us to rethink our strategies. From the perspective of poor people, corruption, irrelevance, and abusive behavior often mar the formal institutions of the state. NGOs too receive mixed ratings from the poor. Poor people would like NGOs to be accountable to them. Poor people's interactions with traders and markets are stamped with their powerlessness to negotiate fair prices. How then do poor people survive? They turn to their informal networks of family, kin, friends, and neighbors. But these are already stretched thin.

We commend to you the authenticity and significance of this work. What can be more important than listening to the poor and working with our partners all over the world to respond to their concerns? Our core mission is to help poor people succeed in their own efforts, and the book raises major challenges to both of our institutions and to all of us concerned about poverty. We are prepared to hold ourselves accountable, to make the effort to try to respond to these voices. Obviously we cannot do this alone.

We urge you to read this book, to reflect and respond. Our hope is that the voices in this book will call you to action as they have us.

CLARE SHORT,   JAMES D. WOLFENSOHN,
Secretary of State for International   President, World Bank
Development, U.K.

Acknowledgments

VOICES OF THE POOR

Can Anyone

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Chapter 1

Listening to the Voices of the Poor

*Poverty is pain; it feels like a disease. It attacks
a person not only materially but also morally.
It eats away one's dignity and drives one
into total despair.*

—A poor woman, Moldova 1997

*The authorities don't seem to see poor people.
Everything about the poor is despised, and above all
poverty is despised.*

— A poor man, Brazil 1995

Introduction

Poverty is pain. Poor people suffer physical pain that comes with too little food and long hours of work; emotional pain stemming from the daily humiliations of dependency and lack of power; and the moral pain from being forced to make choices—such as whether to use limited funds to save the life of an ill family member, or to use those same funds to feed their children.

If poverty is so painful, why do the poor remain poor? The poor are not lazy, stupid, or corrupt—why, then, is poverty so persistent? We explore this problem from two perspectives: one is from the realities, experiences, and perspectives of poor women and men themselves; and the other is from an institutional perspective focusing on the informal and formal institutions of society with which poor people interact. Our analysis is based on a review of 81 Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) reports that are based on discussions with over 40,000 poor women and men. The World Bank conducted these studies in the 1990s in 50 countries around the world.

The book is not an evaluation of particular public action programs, economic policies, or trade regimes. It simply offers a view of the world from the perspective of the poor. It provides rich descriptions of poor people's realities, drawing on their experiences of poverty and the quality of their interactions with a range of institutions, from the state to the household. This book is about their voices. Voices of the poor send powerful messages that point the way toward policy change.

Many books could be written from the PPA studies, focusing on particular contexts and unique relationships in a particular institutional context at a particular time in history. In order to take action at the local level, the details and contours of the patterns of poverty have to be understood in each location, for each social group, for each region, for each country. For example, even in one location in one country poor people themselves make important distinctions between social groups: the dependent poor, the resourceless poor, the temporary poor, the working poor, and God's poor, all of whom have different priorities.

Our book is about the common patterns that emerged from poor people's experiences in many different places. As we moved more deeply into analyses of poor people's experiences with poverty, we were struck repeatedly by the paradox of the location and social group specificity of poverty, and yet the commonality of the human experience of poverty across countries. From Georgia to Brazil, from Nigeria to the Philippines, similar underlying themes emerged: hunger, deprivation, powerlessness, violation of dignity, social isolation, resilience, resourcefulness, solidarity, state corruption, rudeness of service providers, and gender inequity.

The manifestation of these problems varied significantly, but we often found ourselves saying, "We have read this before." Sometimes even the words and images poor people evoked in describing their realities were uncannily similar, despite very different contexts.

To cite one example, single mothers with young children use similar imagery to describe hanging onto their children while somehow still scraping together a living. In South Africa (1998) a widow said, "I was tossed around, getting knocks here and there. I have been everywhere, carrying these children with my teeth." In Georgia (1997) a mother described the pain of leaving small children alone in the home while she "runs like a dog from house to house, selling some sort of clothing or product just to make two lari a day."

We write about the common patterns we found across countries because these have important implications for poverty reduction strategies. The study is part of the *Consultations with the Poor* project undertaken to inform the World Bank's *World Development Report on Poverty 2000/01* and to set a precedent for the participation of poor men and women in global policy debates. The *World Development Report (WDR) on Poverty 2000/01* will evaluate changes in global poverty since the Bank's last WDR on Poverty in 1990, and will propose policy directions for the next decade.

Our analysis leads to five main conclusions about the experience of poverty from the perspectives of the poor. First, poverty is multidimensional. Second, the state has been largely ineffective in reaching the poor. Third, the role of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the lives of the poor is limited, forcing the poor to depend primarily on their own informal networks. Fourth, households are crumbling under the stresses of poverty. Finally, the social fabric—poor people's only "insurance"—is unraveling. These issues are addressed in detail in the following chapters, but an overview of each conclusion is presented here.

Poverty is multidimensional. The persistence of poverty is linked to its interlocking multidimensionality: it is dynamic, complex, institutionally embedded, and a gender- and location-specific phenomenon. The pattern and shape of poverty vary by social group, season, location, and country. Six dimensions feature prominently in poor people's definitions of poverty.

First, poverty consists of many interlocked dimensions. Although poverty is rarely about the lack of only one thing, the bottom line is always hunger—the lack of food. Second, poverty has important psychological dimensions, such as powerlessness, voicelessness, dependency, shame, and humiliation. The maintenance of cultural identity and social norms of solidarity helps poor people to continue to believe in their own

humanity, despite inhumane conditions. Third, poor people lack access to basic infrastructure—roads (particularly in rural areas), transportation, and clean water. Fourth, while there is a widespread thirst for literacy, schooling receives little mention or mixed reviews. Poor people realize that education offers an escape from poverty—but only if the economic environment in the society at large and the quality of education improve. Fifth, poor health and illness are dreaded almost everywhere as a source of destitution. This is related to the costs of health care as well as to income lost due to illness. Finally, the poor rarely speak of income, but focus instead on managing assets—physical, human, social, and environmental—as a way to cope with their vulnerability. In many areas this vulnerability has a gender dimension.

The state has been largely ineffective in reaching the poor. Although the government's role in providing infrastructure, health, and education services is recognized by the poor, they feel that their lives remain unchanged by government interventions. Poor people report that their interactions with state representatives are marred by rudeness, humiliation, harassment, and stonewalling. The poor also report vast experience with corruption as they attempt to seek health care, educate their children, claim social assistance or relief assistance, get paid by employers, and seek protection from the police or justice from local authorities.

In many places poor people identify particular individuals within the state apparatus as good, and certain programs as useful, but these individuals and programs are not enough to pull them out of poverty. The impact of a corrupt and brutalizing police force is particularly demoralizing for the poor, who already feel defenseless against the power of the state and the elite. There are gender differences in poor people's experiences with state institutions that reflect societal norms of gender-based power inequity. Women in many contexts report continued vulnerability to the threat of sexual assault. Despite negative experiences, when outsiders arrive the poor—for the most part—are willing to trust and listen one more time, with the hope that something good may happen in their lives.

The role of NGOs in the lives of the poor is limited, and the poor depend primarily on their own informal networks. Given the scale of poverty, NGOs touch relatively few lives, and poor people give NGOs mixed ratings. In some areas NGOs are the only institutions people trust, and in some cases they are credited with saving lives. Where there is strong NGO presence new partnerships between government and NGOs are beginning to emerge.

However, poor people sometimes also report that, besides being rude and forceful, NGO staff members are poor listeners. Surprisingly,

the poor report that they consider some NGOs to be largely irrelevant, self-serving, limited in their outreach, and also corrupt, although to a much lesser extent than is the state. There are relatively few cases of NGOs that have invested in organizing the poor to change poor people's bargaining power relative to markets or the state. Because the studies were conducted in some countries with the world's largest NGOs (some of which are also the world's most successful NGOs), there are important lessons to be learned. The main message is still one of scale, however—even the largest and most successful NGOs may not reach the majority of poor households.

Thus poor men and women throughout the world must trust and rely primarily on their own informal institutions and networks, while recognizing the limitations of these institutions even under the best of circumstances. Informal associations and networks may help the poor to survive, but they serve a defensive, and usually not a transformative, function. That is, they do little to move the poor out of poverty.

There are important gender differences in the nature and use of informal networks. Because poor women are often excluded from involvement in community and formal institutions, they invest heavily in social support networks that may offer them a hedge in fulfilling their household responsibilities. When everything around them starts to deteriorate, the poor continue to invest in burial societies to ensure that they are at least taken care of in death.

Households are crumbling under the stresses of poverty. The household as a social institution is crumbling under the weight of poverty. While many households are able to remain intact, many others disintegrate as men, unable to adapt to their "failure" to earn adequate incomes under harsh economic circumstances, have difficulty accepting that women are becoming the main breadwinners and that this necessitates a redistribution of power within the household. The result is often alcoholism and domestic violence on the part of men, and a breakdown of the family structure.

Women, in contrast, tend to swallow their pride and go out into the streets to do demeaning jobs, or, in fact, to do anything it takes to put food on the table for their children and husbands. Clearly, this is not necessarily empowering for women. Despite having assumed new roles, women continue to face discrimination in the labor market and gender inequity in the home. They often confront oppressive social norms in both state and civil society institutions in which they live and work, and many have internalized stereotypes that deny their worth as women. Gender inequity within households seems remarkably intractable; economic empowerment or income-earning does not necessarily lead to

social empowerment or gender equity within households. Nonetheless, in some places the studies reveal glimmers of more equitable power relations within the household.

The social fabric, poor people's only "insurance," is unraveling. Finally, from the perspective of poor men and women, the social fabric—the bonds of reciprocity and trust—is unraveling. There are twin forces at work. The more powerful and internally cohesive groups reinforce social exclusion of particular groups, while social cohesion (the connections across groups) breaks down. Economic dislocation and sweeping political changes have produced conflict at the household, community, regional, and national levels. This conflict has three important consequences. First, once societies start unraveling, it is difficult to reverse the process. Second, the breakdown of social solidarity and social norms that once regulated public behavior leads to increased lawlessness, violence, and crime, to which the poor are the most vulnerable. Finally, because the poor lack material assets and depend on the social insurance provided by the strength of their social ties, a breakdown of community solidarity and norms of reciprocity with neighbors and kin affects the poor more than other groups.

The book's organization follows the points just summarized. The remainder of chapter 1 sets out the work's conceptual framework and a discussion of methodology. Chapter 2 discusses poverty from the perspective of the poor, highlights concerns that are central to poor people's definitions of poverty, and includes a case study of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (case study 2.1). Chapter 3 examines poor people's experiences with the state, and includes case studies of access to health care (case study 3.1) and education (case study 3.2). Chapter 4 addresses the nature and quality of poor people's interactions with civil society—NGOs, informal networks, associations, and kinship networks. The chapter ends with two case studies: one on financial services (case study 4.1), and the second on community capacity and village government in Indonesia (case study 4.2). Chapter 5 considers the household as a key social institution, and discusses gender relations within households and how these relations affect and are affected by larger institutions of society. It includes two case studies, on gender and education (case study 5.1) and gender and property rights (case study 5.2). Chapter 6 focuses on social fragmentation, and includes a discussion of social cohesion and social exclusion. It ends with two case studies, one on the police (case study 6.1), and the other on widows as an excluded group (case study 6.2). Chapter 7 concludes the analysis and proposes some policy recommendations. Appendixes provide details of the PPA studies included, the methodology, and supporting data.

Conceptual Framework: Examining Poverty Through Institutions

> *We distrust these institutions because they always deceive us.*
> —Poor men, Guatemala 1994a[1]

Institutions play a critical role in poor people's lives by either responding to or repressing their needs, concerns, and voices. The PPAs analyzed for this study contain assessments of the effectiveness, quality, and accessibility of a range of institutions encountered by the poor, including government agencies, legal and financial institutions, NGOs, community associations, and others. The reports also address institutionalized sociocultural norms, values, and expectations that the poor identify as obstacles or assets in achieving socioeconomic mobility. The most prominent of these institutions is the household, or family, in its various regional and cultural contexts.

By focusing on the quality of interactions and trust between poor women and men and institutions, the PPAs also expose the psychological realities of poverty. Stories of humiliation, intimidation, and fear of the very systems designed to provide assistance pervade the data, and reveal the importance of psychological factors in poor people's life choices and opportunities.

Defining Institutions

> *When the poor and rich compete for services, the rich will always get priority.* —Kenya 1997

Institutions comprise a wide variety of formal and informal relationships that enhance societal productivity by making people's interactions and cooperation more predictable and effective. Some institutions, such as banks, have organizational form, while others have more diffuse patterns of norms and behavior about which there is social consensus. This social consensus includes the expectation of trust or dishonesty in particular social interactions—for example among kin or neighbors when borrowing sugar or looking after each other's children.

Institutions can be understood as complexes of norms and behaviors that persist over time by serving some socially valued purposes (Uphoff 1986). Institutions provide shared understanding of the cultural meaning of activities (Chambliss 1999). The more powerful members of a society have created many institutions in order to regularize and entrench mutually beneficial relationships. Institutions do not necessarily serve the needs

and interests of all, but only of enough influential persons to ensure their preservation. Poor women and men are often peripheral to, or even excluded from, societal institutions. As a result, poor people have developed their own institutions, formal and informal, to ensure their basic security and survival.

Institutions include social relationships at the community level, as well as interactions found in development and social assistance organizations. They are found along a continuum, from the micro or local level to the macro or national and international levels. Institutions often have both formal and informal dimensions, with some part of their operation governed by explicit rules, roles, procedures, and precedents, while unwritten rules, roles, and procedures also shape behavior. An understanding of institutions is important in any project attempting to understand poverty, because institutions affect people's opportunities by establishing and maintaining their access to social, material, and natural resources. They also reinforce capacities for collective action and self-help, while their absence can contribute to immobilization and inertia.

In this book institutions that have organizational form are broadly divided into state and civil society institutions. State institutions include national, regional, and local governments; the judiciary; and the police. Civil society institutions include NGOs, trade unions, community-based organizations, social associations, kinship networks, and so forth.

While these two categories are useful for organizing the PPA data, in reality the boundaries between them are fluid and dynamic. For example, although the dimensions of an institution—such as the caste system—may be seen as primarily sociocultural and operating at the micro level, such an institution often has legal dimensions that formalize it and that link it to wider institutions of the state. Furthermore, when caste determines jobs, education, and associational membership at the national level, caste begins to operate at the macro level. Similarly, the place of religious institutions and political parties in the typology will vary from country to country. In countries with one official religion or one official political party the separation between these state and civil society institutions disappears.

The "institution typology" shown in figure 1.1 inevitably homogenizes a diverse set of institutions, and does not include institutions such as marriage or the household. Nevertheless, the typology is useful for exploring the basic questions of institutional interactions, and points to a host of issues examined in detail in later chapters.

State institutions are formal institutions that are state-affiliated or state-sponsored. They are vested with the power and authority of the state and act in its name, projecting the purposes and interests of those who operate state institutions into the domains of individuals or communities. For

Figure 1.1 Institution Typology

	State Institutions	Civil Society Institutions
Macro	National and state governments District administration Judiciary	NGOs Religious and ethnic associations Trade unions Caste associations
Micro	Local governments Local police Health clinics Schools Extension workers Traditional authority	Community-based organizations Neighborhoods Kinship networks Traditional leaders Sacred sites NGOs

most citizens these institutions are the most important points of direct contact with the ruling national power. The effectiveness of these formal institutions is closely connected to the capacity, legitimacy, and degree of public confidence in the state itself. Legal sanction and state control give these institutions authority and power that is not necessarily related to their actual performance. Ideally, a strong and legitimate state fosters institutions that work to equalize existing social and economic inequalities by extending assistance and opportunities to those citizens possessing fewer resources and less power.

Civil society comprises institutions that are not state-affiliated—they occupy the space between the household and the state (Hyden 1997). Rather than deriving their authority from legal recognition—although some do—civil society institutions draw primarily on the collective will of constituent groups. Both at the macro and micro levels, civil society institutions connect people in collective efforts and may keep states accountable. When states are weak or are considered by particular social groups to be illegitimate, civil society institutions may step in as people's primary points of access to social, material, and natural resources.

The growth of independent civic groups such as trade unions, professional associations, an independent press, NGOs, and community-based organizations can affect and be affected by the state and formal sector. States directly influence the power and freedom afforded to these institutions through legal and other means.

The household is outside this typology and is singled out for separate analysis as a critical institution in the lives of the poor. It embodies a complex set of sociocultural and formal legal structures that defines the choices available to its members. The household is particularly important in the construction of gender identities that determine men's and women's different socioeconomic options.

Poverty amid Plenty: Institutions and Access

> *We poor people are invisible to others—just as blind people cannot see, they cannot see us.* —Pakistan 1993

A fundamental question guiding our analysis is this: What bars the poor from gaining access to resources and opportunities? By listening to poor people and by tracing the processes that structure access and control of resources, we gain valuable insights into the role of institutional relationships in perpetuating conditions of poverty.

Despite an age of unprecedented global prosperity and the existence of a worldwide network of poverty-reduction institutions, poverty persists and is intensifying among certain groups and in certain regions around the world. Socioeconomic mobility is not a universal experience, but varies tremendously across social groups and individuals. Emphasizing aggregate prosperity diverts attention from the variability of access to resources experienced by different individuals and social groups. Almost two decades ago Amartya Sen (1981) addressed this issue in the context of persistent starvation in the midst of plentiful food stocks, noting that different social groups employ different means to gain access and control over food. The simple existence of sufficient food, he asserts, does not necessarily ensure access to that food. The means of securing access, which nearly always involves institutional interaction, are critical. Institutions limit or enhance poor people's rights to freedom, choice, and action (Sen 1984, 1999).

In short, an understanding of the relationship between institutions and those they serve is critical to an understanding of how different social groups and actors secure different capabilities and entitlements. Rights, opportunities, and power—all of which institutions can sanction or restrict—play an important role in the extent to which people can successfully use institutions for accessing resources. Figure 1.2 presents these relations in diagrammatic form. Poor households access opportunities and resources through the medium of civil society and state institutional mechanisms. A poor person's access to opportunities is influenced not only by his or her relationships with institutions outside the household, but also by relationships within the household. The household plays a significant role in

Figure 1.2 Institutions and Access to Opportunities

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
                    │        Poor Households           │
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                    │   │ Women   │ │  Men    │         │
                    │    ╰────────╯ ╰────────╯          │
                    └─────────────────────────────────┘
              ↑↓                              ↑
    ┌──────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐
    │ Civil Society        │◄- -►│  State Institutions   │
    │ Institutions         │      │                      │
    └──────────────────────┘      └──────────────────────┘
              ↕                              ↕
            ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
            │           Opportunity            │
            │   Mobility and Access to Resources │
            └─────────────────────────────────┘

                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                    │ Key                          │
                    │  ──────────►  One-way relationship │
                    │  ◄─────────►  Two-way relationship │
                    │  ◄- - - - -►  Weak links       │
                    └──────────────────────────────┘
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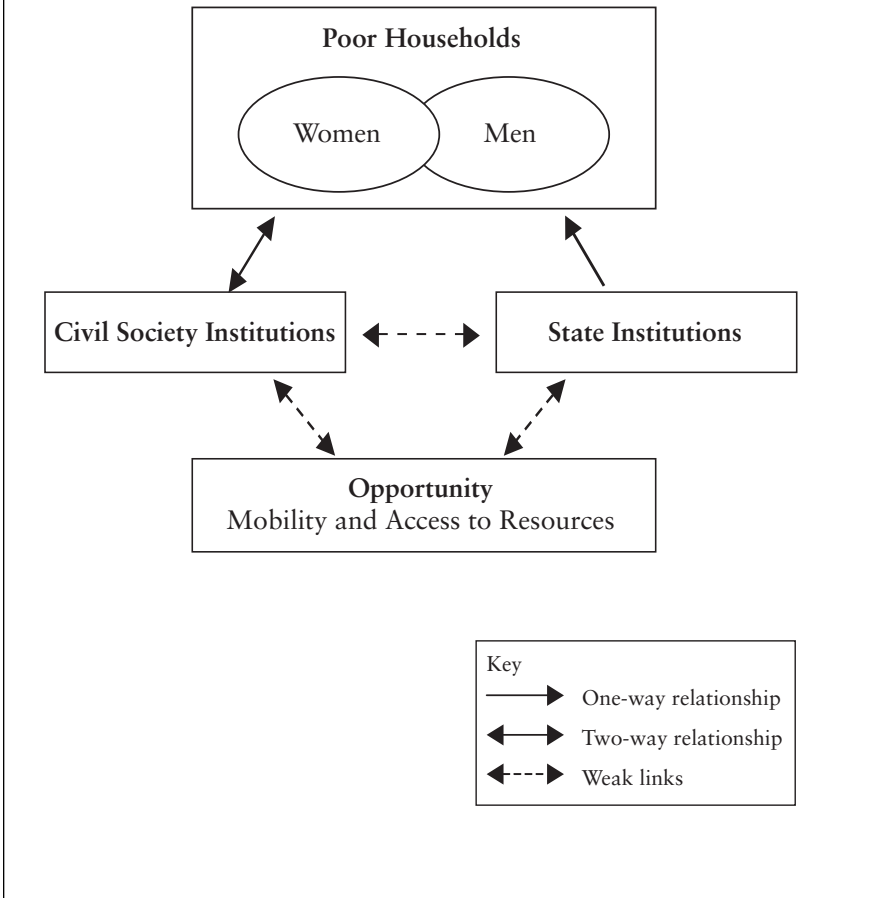
determining gender identity and gender-differentiated access to resources and opportunities.

Consider a poor woman. She may have links with an informal network of women neighbors and friends on whom she relies for emotional support and exchanges of childcare, food, and small amounts of money. Through participation in these horizontal exchanges she both influences and is influenced by the nature of these relationships. She may or may not have contact with NGOs or with other women's groups and associations. She probably has little contact with most formal state institutions, which tend to be a male domain. If she applies to the state for a benefit to which she is entitled, she may or may not get the benefit; she has little influence on the state as an individual. If she and other women facing similar

difficulties organize, however, with or without the help of NGOs, the state may be forced to negotiate and take corrective action. Their ability to organize may also change their negotiating power and access to markets.

Two other points are worth noting about a poor household's institutional relations. First, there is usually no direct connection between the informal networks or organizations of poor people and formal institutions. Typically they work quite independently of each other. This means that, unlike rich people's organizations, poor people's organizations have little access to, or influence on, the resources of the state. This is precisely why the work of many NGOs and, more recently, government agencies is to reach out to poor people's groups (for example, water-users' groups and farmers' groups) to build these bridging connections. The relations thus formed are often of unequal partners.

Second, the impact of institutional relationships can be positive or negative. In the former case, such as in joint forest management committees, poor people may gain access to scarce resources; in the latter case, they may suffer greater insecurity, oppression, and conflict—for example, in their interactions with the police. In more benign cases, state representatives may treat poor people differently from rich people. In any case, individual poor households have very little influence on the nature of the state or on provision of state services, whereas state institutions may have a major impact on individuals, especially when the police or justice systems are coercive or repressive.

To bring about change requires changing the strength and nature of the institutional connections among the poor, civil society, and the state. Poor women's institutional relationships are different from those of poor men, and these differences have implications for intervention strategies. Poor people are rarely organized across communities or connected to rich people's organizations or to the resources of the state. The limited resources circulating within their networks and their lack of organization limit poor people's opportunities and access to resources. To achieve greater equity and to empower the poor, institutions of the state and institutions of civil society must become accountable to the poor.

Approaches to Poverty Assessment

At last those above will hear us. Before now, no one ever asked us what we think. —Poor men, Guatemala 1994a

Understanding how poverty occurs, why it persists, and how it may be alleviated is essential if we are to devise effective, appropriate strategies for social and economic development. A variety of different data collection

instruments are necessary to understand the cultural, social, economic, political, and institutional realities that determine the opportunities and barriers poor people face in their efforts to move out of poverty.

Since the second half of the 1980s multitopic household surveys have been the key tool for measuring and analyzing poverty. Unlike single-topic surveys (such as employment, income, and expenditure surveys), multi topic household surveys aim to gather information on a wide array of topics intimately linked with household welfare. The most well-known of these surveys, the Living Standards Measurement Surveys (LSMS), were piloted in Côte d'Ivoire and Peru in 1985 and have since been implemented in dozens of countries. Such surveys provide crucial information on living conditions: measures of income, expenditure, health, education, employment, agriculture, access to services, and ownership of assets such as land and so on. Household surveys have been the primary data collection tool in poverty assessments.

However, large-scale surveys can only provide an incomplete picture of poverty since they use—in almost all instances—closed-ended questions. Poverty—its meaning and depth, its manifestations and causes—also depends on factors that cannot be easily captured by such questions. Moreover, many important elements may be missed simply because they are not known to researchers. Such factors can be cultural (who is identified as head of a household, who has the power to allocate resources), social (the extent of domestic violence or informal exchange networks), or political (the extent of corruption and crime). They can also be institutional (documentation requirements, the extent of rudeness by service providers, humiliation experienced by the poor making claims, hidden costs incurred) or environmental constraints (natural disasters, seasonality, and environmental degradation or hazards) or multi-faceted (such as insecurity). Obviously, once an issue is known, surveys can be designed to investigate the prevalence of a problem in a population.

Other forms of data collection are also needed to explore location-specific social, political, and institutional criteria, subjective elements of poor people's experiences of poverty, and the ways in which individuals cope or their highly diversified sources of security and livelihoods (Baulch 1996a, Chambers 1997). Sen (1981, 1999) has frequently argued that absolute poverty includes what Adam Smith called "the ability to go about without shame," but the commodities required to maintain social respectability vary from place to place, and national poverty data overlook them.[2]

Unless very carefully designed, household survey data also obscure gender aspects of poverty, such as women's nonwage-based economic contributions to the household (Tripp 1992); the impact of economic

restructuring on the distribution and intensity of women's work (Floro 1995); and the different ways in which men and women respond to social safety nets (Jackson 1996).

Development practitioners and policymakers increasingly acknowledge that a more complete understanding of poverty requires the inclusion of social factors and perspectives of the poor. Sociological and participatory approaches have been proved effective in capturing the multidimensional and culturally contingent aspects of poverty (Booth et al. 1998; Carvalho and White 1997; Patton 1990). The more recent World Bank Poverty Assessments are beginning to include qualitative and participatory methods to complement information from household surveys.

What Is a Participatory Poverty Assessment?

In the early 1990s the World Bank began to conduct Poverty Assessments routinely in order to identify the main poverty problems within a country, and to link the policy agenda to issues of poverty. These Poverty Assessments included quantitative data such as poverty lines, social and demographic characteristics of the poor, and their economic profiles (sources of income, asset ownership, consumption patterns, and access to services).[3] In order to complement these statistical data with an assessment of poverty by its primary stakeholders—poor people themselves—the World Bank also developed the Participatory Poverty Assessment, or PPA.[4]

A PPA is an iterative, participatory research process that seeks to understand poverty from the perspective of a range of stakeholders, and to involve them directly in planning follow-up action. The most important stakeholders involved in the research process are poor men and poor women. PPAs also include decisionmakers from all levels of government, civil society, and the local elite, thereby uncovering different interests and perspectives and increasing local capacity and commitment to follow-up action. PPAs seek to understand poverty in its local social, institutional, and political context. Since PPAs address national policy, microlevel data are collected from a large number of communities in order to discern patterns across social groups and geographic areas, and across location and social group specificities.[5]

These Participatory Poverty Assessments are a recent but growing phenomenon.[6] In 1994 only one-fifth of the Bank's country-level Poverty Assessment reports incorporated PPA material. In 1995 one-third included PPAs, while between 1996 and 1998 PPAs were included in fully half of all Bank Poverty Assessments (Robb 1999). It is this PPA component of the overall Poverty Assessments that we have analyzed.

The methodologies used in the PPAs vary. Depending on the number of field researchers, fieldwork ranged from 10 days to eight months in

the field (the majority were two to four months); sample sizes ranged from 10 to 100 communities; and cost ranged from $4,000 to $150,000 per PPA (Robb 1999). They were most often conducted by an academic institution or an NGO, in collaboration with the country's government and the World Bank.

Two underlying principles make the participatory approach different from other research approaches. First, the research methodology engages the respondents actively in the research process through the use of open-ended and participatory methods. Second, participatory research assumes that the research process will empower participants and lead to follow-up action. This puts special ethical demands on researchers who use participatory methods for policy research.

Participatory approaches, though difficult to quantify, provide a valuable insight into the multiple meanings, dimensions, and experiences of poverty (Wratten 1995). PPAs capture information that standard Poverty Assessments are likely to miss for two reasons. First, unlike survey research, the sets of questions used in PPAs are not predetermined. Rather, open-ended methods such as unstructured interviews, discussion groups, and a variety of participatory visual methods are more commonly used.[7] This allows for the emergence of issues and dimensions of poverty that are important to the community but not necessarily known to the researchers. Second, PPAs take into account power asymmetries both within the household and within communities. Whereas conventional household surveys focus on the household as the unit of analysis, PPAs approach men and women as dissimilar social groups that have distinct interests and experiences. Thus PPAs have the potential to illuminate power dynamics between men and women, and between the elite and the poor. PPAs do not replace traditional household surveys and macroeconomic analyses, but instead provide important complementary information.

Methodology of the Study

This report reflects the first attempt to synthesize the findings from a broad set of PPA studies through systematic content analysis of the experiences, priorities, and reflections of poor women, men, and children.

Issues Addressed

Some of the basic questions we address include:

1. **How do the poor understand and define poverty?**

How do poor men and women experience poverty? How do poor people define poverty according to their own experiences? How do these

definitions differ across lines of gender, class, ethnicity, and region? What policy implications may be drawn from this information?

2. **What are the roles of formal and informal institutions in the lives of the poor?**

How do poor people assess the effectiveness, quality, and accessibility of formal and informal institutions? What roles do institutions—including governmental agencies, legal and financial institutions, social and community organizations, and NGOs—play in the lives of the poor? What are the psychological dimensions of people's interactions with institutions?

3. **How do gender relations within the household affect how poverty is experienced?**

Does the structure of gender relations within the household shift as members respond to changing social and economic conditions? What can we learn about gender relations from the studies? What are the implications for poverty reduction strategies?

4. **What is the relationship between poverty and social fragmentation?**

How has broad political and economic restructuring affected the lives of the poor and society at large? How have social cohesion and social exclusion been affected? How are people coping and surviving?

The Data Set

We began with a broad set of questions, and throughout our research we iteratively refined our questions based on the emerging data. We sought to describe and explain poverty through the voices of the poor. Eighty-one reports were selected for analysis, representing data collected in 50 countries around the world. Almost all were conducted or commissioned by the World Bank since 1993. They were selected from over 300 reports submitted in response to a call for poverty-focused studies that incorporate social analyses and participatory methods.[8] Selection was based on the degree to which the reports used open-ended methods, and on the degree to which they incorporated PPA data and other qualitative assessments into their overall analysis. Not all the reports were called PPAs. Reports with the richest and densest social and qualitative information were selected for the initial analysis. Only a few of the reports successfully combined social analysis, institutional analysis, and participatory methods. For a listing of countries and regional distribution, see appendix 1, and for a listing of PPA reports and authors see appendix 2.

Sampling techniques ranged from nationally representative samples to purposive sampling based primarily on poverty, agro-ecological diversity, and rural and urban diversity. Sample sizes varied from less than one

hundred to 5,000 people. Some studies focused only on the poor while others included the nonpoor. Data collection methods included a range of participatory and social analysis tools, household interviews, observation, key informant interviews, as well as household surveys. A summary description of the sample selection procedures and methodology for each report is found in appendix 3.

Systematic Content Analysis

Recurrent themes were uncovered in the reports by a process of systematic content analysis. In its broadest sense, content analysis can be understood as "any methodical measurement applied to text (or other symbolic material) for social scientific purposes" (Shapiro and Markoff 1977:14). Different researchers have emphasized various aspects of content analysis, from its capacity to generate quantitative descriptions by analyzing word counts (Berelson 1954; Silverman 1993), to its ability to help researchers draw inferences from a text by breaking that text down into discrete units of manageable data that can then be meaningfully reorganized (Stone et al. 1966; Weber 1990). Still others emphasize how content analysis is appropriate for inductive approaches to data analysis (Strauss 1987).

Because the reports analyzed for this book vary by author, research teams, time frames, regions, and methods, we were less concerned with generating quantified counts of words or themes than with identifying and locating—through a systematized reading and coding of the reports—recurrent themes connected to the central questions we posed. Furthermore, we were interested in discovering what the patterns of relationships might reveal, especially in terms of changing relations between men and women, and between individuals and institutions. We used an inductive and iterative research process in which our categories of analysis were repeatedly refined by what we found emerging from the data.

The sheer volume of material necessitated use of qualitative data analysis software. Hard copies of the original report documents were scanned to create text files, and Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing (QSR NUD*IST), a qualitative data analysis software program, was used to code and analyze the contents of the PPA reports. The index tree, which is the data coding system in QSR NUD*IST, is based on a primary coding index composed of a series of researcher-determined categories, termed "nodes," that are hierarchically organized within the program. In addition to the main index tree, a system of free nodes was used to allow coders to capture points of data that emerged as significant, but that were not included in the original conceptualization of the index tree. This coding system identifies individual or grouped units of text (in this case, paragraphs) from the data set that exhibit characteristics relevant to

the investigation of specific research questions.[9] A description of the coding process, nodes contained in the index tree, and examples of outputs on institutional nodes appear in appendixes 4, 5, and 6.

The outcome of this analysis was identification of the recurrent themes described in the remainder of this book. The software did not produce the themes in a mechanical fashion. Human analysis was required at many stages: in the identification of text units to input; in the coding of the units; in the intersection searches and the analysis of what those searches revealed about poor communities; and, finally, in the judgement of what can be said to have emerged from the data, and its implications for policy. Human analysis is the safeguard for the entire process. Many minds worked on the different stages of analysis—data coding, data analysis, the location of examples, and the identification of major themes. The act of questioning whether or not the results made sense, and returning to the data in case of uncertainty (common to both quantitative and qualitative research), guided these processes and averted errors that would have been made by mechanical analysis.

Limitations of the Study

Well-known limitations apply to our research. First, the insights available are limited by the quality of the documents under consideration. The extent to which PPA documents accurately aggregated and reported discussions in the field, and indeed the quality of the information that was generated by the interviews and participatory exercises, directly affect the robustness of this review's conclusions. Every attempt was made to select documents that had rich qualitative data, but the findings remain dependent on data.

Second, the studies were undertaken for different purposes. Data sources varied in size, representativeness, and composition of respondents—hence the study results are not representative at the national level. We make no attempt to count numbers. It is possible that we are overgeneralizing: that is a subject for further research. The 23-country comparative study undertaken as part of the *Consultations with the Poor* project will provide additional evidence.

Third, human error can occur during analysis. The accuracy of data codes depends on the perceptiveness of the coder, and the accuracy of the string and intersection searches depends on the person summarizing them. Accuracy was checked by looking for data on a particular issue in nonrelated string searches and by going back to the original document to ensure that the issue had been examined exhaustively.

Finally, there remains in both quantitative and qualitative work the possibility of human bias. While the researcher who becomes conscious of it can reduce this bias, its absence can never be proven. This risk was

reduced by researchers running independent string searches, holding frequent and mutually challenging group meetings, and checking emerging patterns with number counts, as well as by returning to the original documents.

There are other limitations that relate to the nature of fieldwork, understanding what is unspoken, the dangers of generalization, and the problems of raised expectations and ethics.

Encounters in the field

> We went to Aga Sadek Sweepers Colony in Dhaka and were told that we needed to get the permission of the leaders of the youth club. The next day we returned but could not find our guides. One of us started a group of young men on sketch mapping and the other talked to children about their problems. The youths were quite unwilling to draw a sketch map because one who came from Khulna recalled a case when they were asked to draw a map of their area and two weeks later the government came and evicted the whole area. They eventually agreed when we explained that exact measurements were not needed and only the places of importance like schools, club, and temple should be included. We even suggested that they could keep the original and we would make a copy in our notebooks. As the children were listing their problems, we were rudely interrupted by a Mr. Munna. He said that lots of people came and talked and promised things but never came back. We explained that we were not promising anything. The five or six people with Mr. Munna started to get aggressive. We went to the youth club for help, but they had all sneaked away. We asked the group if we could take the sketch map with us, but they wanted to keep it. —Field notes, Neela Mukherjee, Bangladesh 1996

> We didn't trust the PPA process. Now we understand it, accept it and it has become ours. —Government official, at end of a two-year PPA process, Kenya 1996

Most of the studies mention the anthropological, sociological, and community development codes of conduct and rules that were followed to ensure quality data. These codes of conduct and rules include establishing contacts with communities prior to entry by calling on chiefs, local authorities, or local leaders, and by obtaining permission or going through other credible contacts. Some reports discuss the ways used to win the support of local leaders and yet preclude them from participating in group discussions

that they would automatically dominate. To avoid this problem some researchers approached communities in teams with supervisors talking to the village leaders and other team members conducting group discussions. Many studies mention holding separate group discussions with men and women to ensure that women's voices were heard. Many teams included female fieldworkers to ensure that conversations could be held with women. All teams included researchers who spoke the local languages.

No amount of field training and preparation can ensure that fieldwork is problem-free. The more experienced and well-trained the researchers, the more likely it is that they either resolve or clearly identify problems when they arise, so that findings are used with caution. "In some areas researchers encountered some individual reluctance to participate in interviews which was variably attributed to shyness, distrust, fear and, in the case of women, the absence of the husband to give permission" (Guatemala 1994b).

The most direct reporting of the problems that were experienced was found in the field notes of Neela Mukherjee, who led the Bangladesh study (1996). The problems also point to the danger of doing large sample PPAs in a rush.

It was 2:30 in the afternoon. We were approaching Chibatoli in Hathazari, Chittagong. We asked a villager from the para where we had been working in the morning to introduce us to somebody from the area. This villager accompanied us and together we asked the women to come to talk with us. A few came but many were reluctant because they saw Rukan (my male colleague). They did not want to meet this "outside man." Rukan left and went to talk to some of the village men.

The women, my female colleague (Nazmun), and I started to talk about seasonality and related issues. Then two men who work overseas came and tried to disturb the session. Some women ran away to hide. I took these two men aside and talked to them in order to prevent them from disturbing the women who then were able to continue their analyses with Nazmun.

Rukan was also challenged by other men of the village. They asked him what his intentions were, whose permission we had taken to conduct this work, and why we had not taken the permission of the chairman and members. He was also asked to produce letters of introduction that we did not have. Having completed the seasonality work with the women, we left as there was a high level of suspicion all around.

The process of participation was sometimes hindered due to the presence of dominant men. Women reacted to them with a mixture of fear and respect. Sometimes their influence and effect on the process was so great that we were forced to abandon sessions and move to another location. The nonpoor often made fun of the poor people. For example they jeered, "Write your name and get houses, land, and clothes." —Field notes, Bangladesh 1996

Understanding the unspoken

Women often felt reluctant to talk about some issues such as violence against women inside and outside the home and family planning, except in smaller, more intimate groups. —Bangladesh 1996

Wife-beating is a family problem not to be discussed publicly. —Tanzania 1997

The encounters between PPA researchers and their research subjects are themselves structured by asymmetrical power relations (Pottier 1997; Kauffman 1997). Neither participant in the research dialogue is without expectations or hopes for what may result. It is not surprising that many topics that demand a degree of trust are underreported, particularly within a context in which trust in the state and its affiliates is low. Poor people interviewed for a rapid participatory appraisal may choose not to reveal sensitive information about domestic violence, local government corruption, police intimidation, sexual abuse, and so on without credible guarantees that researchers will not use this information against them. While there is seldom any information within the reports describing instances in which information was withheld from researchers, the examples that do exist are telling.

The problem for our enterprise that seeks to understand the experiences of poverty through the voices of the poor is clear: it is hard to report what the poor don't say. The less time spent in communities, the less likely it is that tacit issues are noticed. Many of the PPAs acknowledge these limitations. Researchers in Mexico, for instance, feel that issues of institutional corruption are underreported, and they recommend future research in this area (Mexico 1995). In Jamaica researchers suspect that an underreporting of sexual abuse and crime is due to the "severe constraints [that] exist for women who want to talk openly about their experiences of rape" (Jamaica 1997). The trust required for subjects to be broached openly cannot be built in a matter of days.

There is, nonetheless, some information available on sensitive topics. The skill and sensitivity of PPA researchers in breaching silences sets the groundwork for important lines of future inquiry. If we take the silence in the data concerning these experiences at face value, we run the risk of presenting a distorted picture of poverty.

Every generalization has an exception

A study of this nature faces the intractable problem of partial generalizations. The PPAs show us the complexity and the heterogeneity of the experiences of poverty. By definition, however, generalizations are not truisms. At the same time, systematic analysis of the PPAs draws out commonalities that cut across age, culture, and continent. This book focuses on such shared themes, especially insofar as they have policy implications.

How does a book communicate recurrent themes in a nuanced way? It would be cumbersome to preface every generalization with the phrase, "In most but not every case …" Neither the sampling frame nor our analysis of the PPAs allows us to say, "For 80 percent of the poor …" Instead we have written the generalizations that emerge, without constant qualification. We ask the reader to bear in mind that *none of the generalizations apply to every location or every poor person.* They describe tendencies, but there are exceptions to every rule.

Similarly, some of the poor who contribute to the PPAs are verbally expressive. They use wonderful turns of phrase, and describe their world with freshness and simplicity. We have quoted these voices to illustrate how an individual, or a group, describes and experiences a general theme. Which has greater communicative power—the generalization, "It is widely accepted that female-headed households are more likely to be poor than male-headed households" (Folbre 1991:89–90)? Or the words of a poor Kenyan woman (1997): "I don't have any house or any land or anything because I parted company with my husband and he does not want us"?

We have used quotations to illustrate general trends. The quotations do not prove the trends—no one person's experience could, and we do not expect one quotation to convince the reader of a trend. Having identified the trends by systematic content analysis, we went back to the PPAs and drew out quotations that illustrate these trends and bring them alive. The voices of the poor communicate their experiences, and keep drawing the reader's attention back to their lives.

One final word on generalizations: It may be that the reader will read a phrase such as "NGO staff are poor listeners," and will believe that this is simply wrong. It does not ring true to his or her experience. The reader can remember concrete instances where NGO staff members were very receptive and sensitive people. The reader has read about other examples, or

heard of them from friends. It is very likely that, at some time or other, every reader will have that experience regarding a so-called general finding of this report.

The largest single value of this PPA review may occur, precisely, in such surprises. They point out that our own experiences may be more unusual or uncommon than we had assumed. They make us listen. They raise questions for further research. Most importantly, they make us turn again and again to the poor; they make us analyze poverty from their perspective.

Raised expectations and ethics

> *Something will happen, otherwise why have you come?* —Slum dweller, Bangladesh 1995

> *You should say what you think and the truth. This fieldwork group does not intend to build a bridge or dam for us as others did. But they can reflect the difficulties that you face in your life as well as your wishes to leaders, to help us in the long run.* —Deputy Chief of village 13, Son Ham-Huong Son, Vietnam 1999a

Participatory researchers are well aware of their responsibilities not to raise false expectations. They try to do participatory research only when there are plans for follow-up action, or to conduct participatory research in a way that maximizes the probability of follow-up. Researchers in the South African PPA report write:

> *Concerns regarding the use of PRA [Participatory Rural Appraisal] methodology were raised at the preparatory workshop in February 1995. These related mainly to the use of the methods for the purpose of extractive research for policy analysis with no accompanying participatory process. In order to avoid this abuse of communities as research objects, a criterion used in selection of the participatory organizations was that the research be part of ongoing work, and that the organization and communities undertaking the research were in a position to use the results to further local development.* —South Africa 1998

To overcome this ethical issue, many PPAs work with local partners who have on-the-ground development programs. Sometimes this is just not possible. If researchers still decide to go ahead, it is their ethical responsibility to make clear to communities that they have come empty-

handed, rather than fear that if they are honest they will not get access to a community. Most researchers report that, once participants realize that the researchers have indeed come empty-handed, the discussions get beyond a "We are all poor" attitude that poor communities sometimes adopt for outsiders, in the hope of getting assistance. It is precisely to get over these initial hurdles that researchers spend several days in communities and use a variety of methods to triangulate information from different sources.

As communities get more and more saturated with researchers who are unable to commit to follow-up action, community groups are beginning to take a stand. Researchers in Guatemala had a range of experiences:

> *A further limiting factor to work in marginal urban areas was the prohibition by local authorities to permit research team entry into a settlement, in the absence of concrete study results such as a future project or payments to informants. In contrast, the region 1 team reported their presence generated such interest and enthusiasm that people stood in line to be interviewed, and they were occupied late into the night talking to communities. In fact, one researcher was threatened at gunpoint by an inebriated man if he did not agree to interview him. The reason stated for the high interest in the study on the part of the Ladino groups was the relative lack of attention to this region where the presence of both government agencies and nongovernmental organizations is severely attenuated.*
> —Guatemala 1997b

In many countries, including Guatemala, Kenya, Tanzania, and Vietnam, poor people agreed to spend time with researchers in the hope that their voices would be carried to those who have the power to affect decisions that affect poor people's lives. In Guatemala poor people express the hope that "At last those above will hear us," and say that "No one ever asks us what we think (before now) and now the president will hear what we say" (Guatemala 1997b).

Some Final Thoughts on Method

We contend that participatory methods can provide unique insights into the complexity, diversity, and dynamics of poverty as a social as well as an economic phenomenon. Furthermore, information from qualitative assessments can give policymakers a deeper, richer, and ultimately better understanding of economic problems, resulting in more effective poverty alleviation strategies.

Box 1.1 Use of Uganda PPA

The Uganda PPA process is led by the Uganda government with multiple civil society partners. Currently, participatory poverty assessment principles are being internalized at three levels: (1) central government, the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development (MFPED), and the Ministry of Local Government; (2) local governments, particularly the nine partner districts where the study was conducted; and (3) research institutions, such as the Economic Policy Research Centre at Makerere University. Local ownership of the PPA process and strategic dissemination of findings have led to the following changes.

There is an awareness among politicians and civil servants of the concerns of the poor that has been raised through dialogues, briefing documents, public presentations, regional workshops, and the media.

PPA findings are included in influential government documents, such as the annual Background to the Budget 1999–2000, and the bi-annual Poverty Status Report. The Plan for Modernization of Agriculture now includes the poor as primary producers, focusing interventions on their constraints and priorities for reducing poverty.

The mid-term expenditure framework process used the PPA findings for reviewing public investment programs and sector expenditures. Government allocated additional resources to clean water resources in response to poor people's priorities.

Flexibility in the utilization of conditional and equalization grants by districts has been introduced to respond to the location of specific needs identified in the PPA. Grant utilization procedures have been modified accordingly.

The Poverty Action Fund is reoriented to monitor the effective utilization of conditional grants and the impact on the poor. Poverty indicators identified by poor people have been included in recent national household surveys.

Source: Uganda 1999.

One of the unique characteristics of this research is the breadth of data it encompasses as it draws out cultural, social, political, and historical specificity that make each case unique. The policy challenge that results is to formulate and implement poverty alleviation measures that succeed because they fit the detailed requirements of each case. Therefore, while we may ask, "What are the trends that unify the experiences of the poor across regions?" we must never lose sight of the question these data are truly suited to help answer. That question is, "What is it about how poverty and social inequality are expressed in a given time, place, and circumstance that must be reflected in policy measures?"

Increasing numbers of Participatory Poverty Assessments are being undertaken by governments, with the World Bank and other international agencies. While the methodology can be refined, further studies can only be justified if their findings are used to inform poverty reduction strategies that make a difference in poor people's lives. The three-year Uganda PPA process is one example of how the approach can be used to respond to poor people's priorities and realities (see box 1.1).

Notes

1. To increase readability, when we use material from the PPAs that make up our database we reference only the country and year of the report. A complete list of the authors of the reports appears in appendix 2. We are grateful to the researchers whose work forms our core material and to many colleagues who sent us documents. We are particularly grateful to Nora Dudwick, who made her studies on Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union available to us.

2. There has been, and remains, an epistemological disagreement between those who define poverty as something subjective, and those who define poverty as objective and as absolute (see Sen 1983, 1985, 1992). In the former case, the poor are those who consider themselves to be poor (a problematic position in the case of the person who describes himself as poor because he has a Cadillac but his neighbor has a BMW—but for defenders see Townsend 1971). There is also a long history of scholars attempting to measure poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon (see Alkire 1999).

3. For an evaluation of Poverty Assessments see World Bank 1997a.

4. The term Participatory Poverty Assessment was coined by Lawrence Salmen at the World Bank in December 1992 in a short paper entitled, "Participatory Poverty Assessment: Applying Beneficiary Assessment Techniques to Poverty Policy Issues." This paper was then expanded into "Participatory Poverty

Assessment: Incorporating Poor People's Perspectives into Poverty Assessment Work" (April 13, 1993), and eventually published in 1995 (Salmen 1995). The earliest PPAs in the World Bank were designed and managed by a small group of social scientists. Larry Salmen worked in Madagascar and Cameroon; Maurizia Tova worked in Burkina Faso (and introduced visual methods); Andy Norton worked in Zambia and Ghana (and introduced PRA methods); and Deepa Narayan worked in Kenya and Tanzania (and combined SARAR, PRA methods, and consumption expenditure surveys on statistically representative national samples). Much of this early work was made possible by bilateral financing, particularly from the British and Dutch governments. Under the leadership of Rosalyn Eyben, DFID, the United Kingdom has played a particularly important role in supporting PPA work in the World Bank. For a discussion of methodological issues from PPAs, see Holland and Blackburn 1998.

5. "The premise [of PPAs] is that involving the poor in the process will contribute to ensuring that the strategies identified for poverty reduction will reflect their concerns, including the priorities and obstacles to progress as seen by the poor themselves" (Norton and Stephens 1995:1).

6. There is a long history of social analysis in the World Bank. As early as 1979 a Bank publication detailed the contribution that social analysis could make to each stage of the project cycle, and by 1980 the Bank had hosted a conference, "Putting People First," that discussed, among other things, the value, mechanisms, and costs of participatory approaches (Cernea 1979, 1985). By 1984 the Bank's Operational Manual Statement 2.20, "Project Appraisal" required that project preparation and appraisal take into account these social dimensions. Lawrence Salmen focused on listening as a tool to improve project design and evaluation in *Listen to the People* (Salmen 1987) and *Toward a Listening Bank* (Salmen 1998). In 1995, under the leadership of Gloria Davis, Social Assessment Guidelines were issued that bring together social analysis and participatory approaches within one framework. Pioneering work has been undertaken in all the regions led by teams of social scientists within countries and the World Bank (see Cernea 1994; Cernea and Kudat 1997).

7. For toolkits on participatory methods, see Narayan and Srinivasan 1994; Rietbergen-McCracken and Narayan 1998; and World Bank 1996b. For an extensive collection of materials on participatory methods at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, U.K., search http://www.ids.ac.uk/pra.

8. Several more participatory poverty studies were drawn to the authors' attention during the review of the final draft of this book, too late for inclusion.

9. Text units most often comprised single or multiple paragraphs, but sometimes consisted of only one or two sentences, depending on the formatting of the text appearing in the original report. Coding was very often assigned to several adjacent text units at once. The entire set of text units analyzed in this project totaled slightly over 29,000.