

## CHAPTER TWO PHASE ONE METHODS AND FINDINGS

**THE MORAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL UNDERPINNING OF THIS RESEARCH IS THE PRINCIPLE THAT MEASURES OF POVERTY CANNOT BE JUST OR JUSTIFIABLE UNLESS THE VIEWS OF THOSE WHO ARE EXPERIENCING POVERTY ARE UNDERSTOOD AND TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT. THIS IS NOT TO SUGGEST THAT THE SUBSTANTIAL BODY OF EXPERT LITERATURE AND EXPERIENCE IN POVERTY MEASUREMENT SHOULD BE DISCARDED, BUT TO ARGUE FOR THE IMPORTANCE OF GROUNDING MEASURES IN PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES.**

This research was not fully participatory in that the aims of the research were driven by our 'expert' and 'outsider' assessment of the shortcomings of existing measures of poverty and gender disparity. The research questions were determined by the research team, which included people working with organisations directly working to combat poverty and secure rights, but did not involve consultation with participants. However, participatory principles shaped our overall methodology and were central to the methods chosen in phase one.

In the first phase of research, research teams used participatory methods to explore how men and women across the life cycle conceived of poverty and related hardships, to gain insight into what aspects of poverty they considered should be the subject of a poverty measure, and to establish the extent to which their view of these things varied according to their age and/or gender.

A research protocol was developed early in the project, in dialogue with local teams, not to act as a rigid set of requirements to be imposed on local research teams in the field, but to make explicit the methodological and ethical approaches that guided the research. The research protocol set out both the methods to be used by local research teams and the processes for engaging with and

seeking support from community leaders, seeking informed consent from participants, and ensuring the confidentiality of participants to the extent possible and appropriate within the diverse research settings.<sup>20</sup> Central to the ethical approach of the research was to ensure that participants were not placed in situations that made them uncomfortable or exposed them to censure, exclusion or violence from community members during or after the research. A key methodological strategy to promote a safe research environment was to ensure that group methods placed participants with people of the same sex and at the same phase of the life cycle.

### The research question

We did not begin the research free from thoughts about how poverty and gender equity should be measured, and did not seek to undertake purely inductive research, allowing the questions to emerge as the fieldwork progressed. Rather, we undertook a critical review of existing poverty measures and the relevant literature and engaged in dialogue with others engaged in the field and with the research teams who would carry out the field research in each country. A workshop was held in Oslo in March 2009, which involved leading researchers in the areas of poverty measurement and gender, with the aim of challenging our own thinking, and building on or complementing other research efforts.

The overall research question that our project sought to answer is:

**What is a just and justifiable measure of poverty that is genuinely gender sensitive and capable of revealing gender disparities?**

This question guided the project through all three phases. For the purposes of the first phase, we broke this question down into three sub-questions:

1. How is poverty best measured?
2. How is poverty gendered?
3. For poor men and women, what are the other most important gender inequities? That is, are there some individual deprivations that affect females and males differentially that poor people identify as very important but do not characterise as part of poverty?<sup>21</sup>

20. The research (Protocol: 2010/020) was approved by the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee on 18 May 2010.

21. These questions draw in part from distinctions made by Simon Maxwell in *The Meaning and Measurement of Poverty*, Overseas Development Institute, 2009.

We were interested in participants' views and whether these corresponded with a range of distinctions that are made in the extant literature on poverty measurement:

1. Do participants believe there are different categories of poverty? For example, do they distinguish between (i) the amount of time someone has been poor (chronic poverty from transitory poverty), (ii) different levels of poverty (say, the ultra poor from the somewhat poor), or (iii) those who are not at risk of poverty, those who are at risk, and those who are poor?
2. What dimensions, or areas of life, do participants think are part of poverty? Is poverty exclusively monetary, or does it include non-monetary goods? Is poverty best thought of as including time use and labour burden (particularly the total amount of time spent working to survive), or social and communal resources?
3. What standards do participants use for the evaluation for poverty (absolute poverty or relative poverty)?
4. Is poverty just about access to resources, or are factors like control over resources or the availability of opportunities also relevant?
5. Do participants take account only of current consumption or do they also consider the overall stock of assets when making poverty determinations?
6. Do participants distinguish between the relevance of 'inputs' and 'outcomes' in poverty assessment? For example, do they make a distinction between those who do not have enough and those who are not able to achieve enough?
7. Do participants take account of the length of time and the amount of work needed to do to acquire the resources they have in making determinations about poverty?

The participatory nature of the research, particularly in the first phase, called for local knowledge and understanding of each context in which the field research was to be carried out. Research teams were established in each country, who were crucial not only to the gathering of data, but also to the development of the methodological approach and methods to be used. Workshops involving the project team and the local research teams were held in Canberra in March 2010 (with researchers from Fiji, the Philippines, and Indonesia) and Pretoria in May 2010 (with researchers from Angola, Malawi, and Mozambique).

## Site selection

In each country, we aimed to have one urban community, one rural community, and one community where the participants were marginalised people—that is, subject to systematic discrimination or exclusion—such as a squatter settlement, or a community without a clear administrative boundary, a group of internally displaced people, or an ethnic or religious minority.<sup>22</sup> Local research teams, with their detailed knowledge of the country context, were central in identifying sites within the broad criteria discussed above. By conducting participatory research in a wide range of social contexts, we sought to ensure that the investigation was open to various conceptions of poverty and various contexts of deprivation.

In Angola, research was conducted in Viana, a semi-urban area in Luanda province, in Kilamba-Kiaxi, an urban municipality in Luanda (the capital city), and in Lunda Sul, a rural area in the northeast of the country. In Fiji, research was conducted in Naleba, a rural largely Indian settlement, in Nausouri, an urban, largely Fijian settlement, and in Nanuku, a mixed urban squatter settlement. In Indonesia, research was conducted in the rural area of Sampang District on Madura Island in East Java province, in the urban area of Surabaya City, East Java, and the marginalised area of China Benteng, in Tangerang City, West Java. In Malawi, research was conducted in Somo Village, a rural area in the south of Balaka district, in Mtopwa village, a squatter settlement near Blantyre City, and in Mkwanda Village, on the border of Blantyre and Chiradzulu districts. In Mozambique, site selection did not strictly follow the urban, rural, marginalised categories, as it was deemed to be too difficult by the local research team to identify selected sites that matched these categories. The research was conducted in Inhambane province, Zavala district, Zambezia province, Namacurra district and Nampula province, Ribaue district. In the Philippines, research was conducted in the municipality of Paracelis in Mountain Province (the rural site), in Sitio Tulungan in the capital Manila (an urban community based near a major landfill), and Iligan City in Northern Mindanao with the Bajau, a displaced and marginalised community.<sup>23</sup>

## Participant selection

Any feminist research project undertaking participatory work must be conscious of the possibility of deliberative exercises being dominated and distorted by pre-existing

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<sup>22</sup>. We recognise that many communities will not easily fit into one of these three categories. All communities will have many distinguishing features and some communities fall somewhere on a continuum between urban and rural. All marginalised communities will also be characterised by their urban-rural status. Furthermore, identifying a marginalised community can be difficult in countries where most communities face systematic deprivation in a variety of ways.

<sup>23</sup>. See the national reports at [www.genderpovertymeasure.org](http://www.genderpovertymeasure.org) for more detailed information.

inequalities that shape the interactions between researchers and participants, and amongst participants themselves.<sup>24</sup>

Several steps were taken to attempt to mitigate the effect of a person's social location on his or her ability to participate in and freely express and explore ideas during group activities. Participants, once invited, were divided by gender and age, resulting in groupings of young men, young women, middle aged men, middle aged women, and older men and older women. The age at which participants were divided between young, middle-aged, and older depended on the country of research, as both life expectancies and life cycles vary considerably across countries. Life expectancy is highest in Fiji and Indonesia (70 years) and lowest in Mozambique (49 years).<sup>25</sup> Within the context, country research teams determined what age ranges best demarcated key life stages of youth/without major responsibilities, adulthood, where productive and reproductive roles structure the lives of many women and men, and older age.

The project deliberately aimed for a diverse selection of participants, and attempted to take account of intersecting axes of oppression. We encouraged research teams to include participants from a wide range of social locations with diverse life experiences. We hoped that people living with disabilities, people from sexual minorities, people from marginalised religious and ethnic groups, as well as people at all stages of the life cycle would be included in the research. In practice, it was occasionally challenging to include all of the groups that might have helped to provide further insight into our main research question. For example, it was not possible in some communities to identify sexual minorities to participate. It is important to note here, that this research did not involve long-term, ethnographic research and interaction between researchers and the communities was limited in terms of time and the nature of engagement. As a consequence, it was not always possible for local research teams to build levels of trust and local knowledge necessary to identify and engage with the most marginalised and discriminated against groups or individuals. Nevertheless, as is evident from the country reports, a highly diverse group of individuals participated in phases one and two of this research.

## Research methods

Six research methods were used in the first phase of research. These methods were designed to examine and elicit participant responses to a number of key issues. Methods were designed, and later revised and adapted, to ensure that they were appropriate for participants with low or no literacy skills.

### 1. Informant interviews

The first method was key informant interviews. Researchers met with members of the community deemed by the local research team to have special insight into the functioning of the community and the nature of poverty in that community (such as local civil society leaders). The discussions helped to introduce (or in many cases reintroduce) the researcher to the community, its recent history, and the specific forms of deprivation that might be salient at the moment.

### 2. Guided group discussions

The second method involved guided group discussions. These groups were divided by age and gender, so there were groupings of young women, young men, middle aged women, middle aged men, and older women, and older men. The guided group discussions addressed three different issues.

First issue: What are the main features of the socio-economic context in which the participants live? Are there particular factors or events that the project team should know about when analysing the data?

#### Questions for participants

1. How would you describe your community?
2. Are any current or recent events having a big impact on life here?

Second issue: What do poor people think constitutes poverty? Do poor people think that what constitutes poverty differs according to (i) gender; (ii) age; (iii) any other general factor such as ethnicity?

#### Questions for participants

1. When you think about whether someone is poor or not, what sorts of things do you take into consideration?
2. (Having made a list of the responses, ask) Are any of these things more significant for women than men? If so, which things in particular? Why do you think they are more significant for women?
3. Are any of these things more significant for men than women? If so, which things? Why do you think they are more significant for men?

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24. For a critical perspective on participation see Cooke, B., & Kothari, U. (2001) *Participation: The new tyranny?* UK: Zed Books.

25. These estimates are from World Development Indicators, retrieved in the year of the first phase of research <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN>

4. Are any of these things more significant for children than for older people? If so, which things? Why do you think they are more significant for children?
5. Are any of these things more significant for older than for younger people? If so, which things? Why do you think they are more significant for older people?

Third issue: Is poverty the main thing that makes life hard? Are there important hardships not related to poverty?

#### Questions for participants

1. What makes life hard for women?
2. Do the same things make life hard for men, or are there differences?
3. What makes life hard for girls?
4. Are these the same things that make life hard for boys, or are there differences?
5. Can people who are not poor be affected by any of these hardships? If yes, which ones? Are people who are not poor affected to the same extent as those who are poor?
6. What hardships do poor people in particular face?
7. What opportunities do poor people in your community have to improve their lives? Are there differences in these opportunities between men and women; girls and boys? Between people at your stage of life and those at other stages of life? (If yes), what are these differences?
8. What strengths or resources help you get through the hardships? Are there differences in the resources, both private and communal, that are accessible to men and women; girls and boys? Between people at your stage of life and those at other stages of life? If the strengths or resources are communal, how are they provided and how are they acquired? Is there different access for men and women? If participants say that communal resources are important, ask whether they take access to communal resources into account when assessing someone's poverty.

### 3. Brainstorming—poverty ladder

The third method used in the first phase involved asking a threshold question about whether participants thought there were different levels of poverty. If the response was positive, a brainstorming session regarding features of poverty was followed by the creation of a poverty ladder. Participants were asked to design a ladder and to identify the features that would mark a person's deprivation at each point along the ladder. Participants were free to identify the number of steps the ladder should include, and the defining features of each step.

Fourth issue: Do participants think that there are distinct levels of poverty? If yes, what are the defining features of each level?

#### Question for participants

1. Are there different levels of poverty? If so, what makes up (constitutes) poverty at each level?

### 4. Brainstorming—ranking of dimensions needed to live free from poverty

The fourth method involved a brainstorming and ranking of dimensions that are needed to live a life free from poverty. Our aim was that the exercise required participants to generate a list of areas of life that are relevant to identifying a person as poor.

Fifth issue: What does a poor person need to make them no longer poor? Is more money the answer, or are there some things that are needed to get out of poverty that money can't buy?

#### Questions and method

1. Group brainstorm. List all the things that are needed to stop an individual being poor.
2. Group ranking activity Prioritise the list from most to least important in stopping an individual being poor.
3. Work through the list, asking of each item whether it is (i) equally important for all people or is more important for some (for example men, women, boys, girls, people with disabilities, members of ethnic or religious minorities); and (ii) equally attainable for some as against others.
4. Again work through the list, asking of each item: would more income or wealth mean that an individual is able to buy or otherwise get access to this item? If money can't buy this item, why not?

## 5. Household mapping

The fifth method involved a household mapping exercise in which participants considered hypothetical homes and discussed whether poverty is different for different members of the household, or whether some members are more likely to be poor than others.

Sixth issue: Is poverty different for different members of a household? This question includes two aspects: (i) is what constitutes poverty different for different members of the household? and (ii) are different members of the household more or less likely to be poor?

### Questions and method

1. Ask participants to list the kinds of goods, services and other resources that each member of a typical poor household in their community receives/has/has access to. Examples would include food, clothing, schooling, medical care, free time, and money.
2. Ask whether family members (in general, not necessarily their family) receive the same amounts and/or the same quality. If some receive less and others more (or some better quality and others poorer quality), why is this? What do you think of this distribution? Should it stay as it is, or should it change?
3. When there isn't enough to go around, how is allocation decided? Do particular household members usually go without or receive less than others? If so, why? What do you think of this? Would allocation be different if there were different household members? (Here the researcher could suggest adding or subtracting members and ask what difference the change would make. If participants have been assuming a male-headed household, it would be particularly important to ask what difference it would make if the household head were a woman. Researchers could also ask whether there are additional members that are often part of the household who have been missed, such as in-laws, grandparents, family members from other households who they often care for, other spouses, etc. What would their presence mean for distribution?)
4. Ask whether some members of the household have to work (paid or unpaid, inside or outside the home) harder than others. Does this affect the way the household's resources are distributed? Does having to work more or harder make someone more or less poor?

5. (If participants' responses suggest that resources are distributed unequally within the household, ask): Does unequal distribution of resources mean that different household members suffer different levels of poverty?

## 6. In-depth individual interviews

The sixth and final method was a series of in-depth individual interviews. The individual interviews provided two opportunities for our research teams. The first was to include participants who might have been excluded from group discussions, either because of various social barriers or pressures or because of previous obligations. The second opportunity was to follow up on any questions that had been raised through the various group methods but required greater exploration.

## Findings and analysis

Within qualitative, participatory methodologies, data collection and data analysis are not clearly distinguishable stages of the research process. Analysis begins in the field and includes not only the 'data' provided by participants, but also the researchers' observations. Among the tools used by researchers were standard observation sheets and researcher diaries. Standard observation sheets enabled researchers to record their impressions, including of any factors that impacted on the research, immediately after each session. Diaries enabled researchers to record unstructured impressions and ideas, including early analysis, while in the field. Each of these tools is essential to qualitative research and an important part of analysis.

Analysis of rich qualitative data requires that researchers be intimately familiar with not only the data but also the context within which data were collected. Thus, initial analysis of phase one was conducted by local research teams, who were able to mine the data for meaning, while illuminating the local context within which data were collected and should be interpreted. As discussed, phase one involved six research methods, each of which was used with several groups of participants: in most countries six groups (older women, older men, middle aged women, middle aged men, younger women and younger men). Data gathered from each method were analysed for each group, identifying both themes and topics and the frequency with which particular themes and topics were raised by each sex/age group. This process ensured that findings reflected both the research question being addressed by the method and illuminated the differences based on both gender and age. Having analysed data from each method, analysis was undertaken across methods in order to compare and contrast themes and topics arising from each research question and across age and sex groups. Local research teams then compared

and contrasted findings across national sites, drawing out commonalities and differences according to geographic and social location and combining these findings with findings from each sex and age group. Each research team subjected the initial analysis to scrutiny within the team to validate the findings. In the case of the Philippines team, this was done in a systematic manner by randomly selecting ten per cent of coded transcripts for review by other team members.

An analysis workshop, held in Canberra in March 2011, brought together local research teams, project researchers, and project staff to review the findings of phase one, identify commonalities and differences across sites, and begin to identify common themes across sites. This workshop provided an opportunity for a level of validation and reflexivity among all those engaged in the research in different capacities.

Each country's research team produced a synthesis report of their findings for each method in each community. In one case, the Philippines, a national report and specific site reports were produced. The reports were then developed by the local research teams through a process of iterative dialogue with, and requests for clarification and editing suggestions from, project staff and partner and chief investigators. The result is a rich set of reports across eighteen sites in six countries, reflecting a wide range of diversity among participants. Each research report discusses the analysis process in greater detail. The reports capture some of the challenges of carrying out this kind of research, particularly in remote and very poor sites. They also reveal the great richness that comes from qualitative, participatory research. Full reports are available at [www.genderpovertymeasure.org](http://www.genderpovertymeasure.org).

Capturing the wealth of information provided by the country synthesis reports in a single document such as this is a challenging task, and inevitably some of the richness of country reports and subtle nuances of the participants' views are lost. Our readers are encouraged to spend time with the country synthesis reports. While the reports provided crucial input to subsequent stages of the research, they are important research outputs in their own right, documenting the views of poor women and men about poverty and hardship.

## Common findings

At every site, participants identify different levels of poverty. However, the number of levels of poverty varies. At some sites, as few as two categories of poverty were identified. At other sites, up to five or more levels of poverty were identified in group discussions. A common finding across many sites was that there existed at the very bottom a group of people deeply deprived in a variety of dimensions: people who are constantly hungry, have poor clothes and shelter (if they have any at all), are excluded from community support, have no capital

to build from, and have little access to services. This group is perceived to be extremely vulnerable to a wide range of risks and shocks, and to subjectively have little hope for future improvement. This categorisation seems to overlap with those identified in the literature as the 'ultra-poor', 'extreme-poor', or 'poorest of the poor'. The categorisation might suggest that this is not just a difference of degree but of kind. At many sites there was a unique word in the local language for this group of the very worst off, and they were described as utterly deprived in many ways.

In almost all cases, participants easily marked various steps between poor and rich. This finding confirms critiques of binary poverty lines (used in headcount index exercises) that only count people as poor or not poor and are insensitive to a person's distance from the poverty line. It suggests that an adequate measure of poverty would be sensitive to degrees of deprivation for individuals, rather than using binary categorisations of deprived or not deprived.

At every site, unsurprisingly, participants' assessments of poverty and hardship are reflective of the circumstances in which they find themselves. The level and kind of deprivation required to categorise an individual as very poor is in part determined by the context they are in and the deprivations they face.

Participants did not directly reflect on the difference between relative and absolute poverty. But responses provide support for both conceptions: on the one hand, constructed poverty ladders and identified dimensions and cut-offs were placed on an independent scale that did not refer to the status of others (that is, people who were poor were said to have no mat to sleep on, rather than comparing their sleeping arrangements to their neighbours'). On the other hand, standards of assessment both implicitly and explicitly referred to the lives others are leading—clothing had to be suitable in one's community, while the quality of one's shelter or health care was often assessed in comparison with those who had better. Participants' standards of assessment are also highly sensitive to social location, including age, gender, geographic location, form of employment, social role, responsibilities and obligations, and so on (more on this below).

In every site, common dimensions of poverty include:

MOST COMMON DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY	
<p><b>Nearly every participant mentioned these categories.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A lack of employment and income earning opportunities.</li> <li>2. A lack of quality education, for oneself or one's children.</li> <li>3. A lack of adequate health care, for oneself and one's household, or frequently falling ill.</li> <li>4. Insufficient or low quality food.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Other very common dimensions included:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Inadequate and low quality shelter, with low quality household assets.</li> <li>6. Inadequate clothing, especially by the standards of one's community.</li> <li>7. Inadequate sanitation.</li> <li>8. A lack of adequate, clean, or easily accessible water.</li> </ol>

TABLE 3: THE MOST COMMON DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY

#### COMMON BUT LESS FREQUENTLY MENTIONED DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY

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| 1. Inadequate transportation and roads.  | 12. Being subject to violence.   |
| 2. Begging and other degrading or dangerous work.  | 13. Being subject to economic exploitation.  |
| 3. A lack of support from friends and family.  | 14. Being subject to sexual exploitation.  |
| 4. A lack of access to social services or other basic services.                                | 15. Lacking the ability to present oneself in a way that meets the standard of one's society (such as not having cosmetics). |
| 5. An inability to access financial services and productive capital or being heavily indebted. | 16. Lacking a cell phone or other forms of communication.  |
| 6. An inability to contribute to others or to participate in community functions.              | 17. Lacking official identification and citizenship.   |
| 7. A lack of electricity.  | 18. Not having secure access to contraception and/or sanitary pads.  |
| 8. A lack of voice and recognition in community and government.                                | 19. A lack of ownership of assets and secure property rights to those assets.  |
| 9. Being displaced.  |  |
| 10. Being near or having survived armed conflict.  |  |
| 11. Humiliation and shame.   |  |

TABLE 4: COMMON BUT LESS FREQUENTLY MENTIONED DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY

A common theme across sites is not just the availability (or lack) of certain goods and services, but the quality and price of these goods and services and the regularity and security of access. For example, many participants have children in school but they often believe that the quality of schools is quite poor. Similarly, most participants believe that poor people access some forms of health care, but this often involves traditional healers or poorly staffed or equipped clinics. In Naleba, Fiji, youth participants contend that it is the lack of quality and variety of food that allows one to identify others as poor. Uncertainty surrounding the security of one's home and possessions, or access to goods and services, is central to the experience of poverty for many participants.

In many cases, the term 'hardship' captured the gendered distribution of deprivation better than poverty. Many participants, though certainly not all, associated 'poverty' with material poverty, and viewed that as something shared widely, and often evenly, between men and women. But participants were much more likely to identify gender differences in hardships that men and women face. There are three general areas in which these are revealed. First, the burdens that participants face are highly gendered. Nearly all participants recognised socialised roles and responsibilities which are highly gendered. These roles and responsibilities affect the burdens participants face when deprived. For example, women in Indonesia reported that they bear greater responsibility for child care when resources are scarce and feel worse when they are unable to provide for their children.<sup>26</sup> Differential burdens are also present in relationships and reproduction. In Malawi, women and girls reported facing greater pressure to marry, especially when in economic need, and face physical, emotional, and financial difficulties when carrying unwanted pregnancy. Second, both men and women often identified different opportunities for responding to deprivation. For example, in Malawi a female participant noted that, when times are difficult, men can find short term casual labour, but women are limited in their

options (for reasons such as mobility, education or social constraints) and often must turn to prostitution. Third, participants seemed to identify gender differences in the ability to control their lives. All participants who addressed this subject expressed frustration at the way in which outside forces determine how well their lives go—from government interference and bribery to droughts and hurricanes to economic downturns. But men and women tended to identify different kinds and levels of control over the decisions that affect their lives—in public political discussions, in household decision-making and in social interactions.

Importantly, almost all of the first phase fieldwork rejected a simple view of how gender, age, and generation function in the distribution of goods and services. The simple view might hold that women, children and the elderly are always disadvantaged at the expense of men. But many participants, from a variety of sites and social locations, rejected these views, at least in a simple formulation. First, many, though not all, participants initially identified members of all gender and age groups as equally poor (though some later revised their opinions). Second, participants suggested that, in times of scarcity, distribution was based on need or function—for example, many reported that children would eat first when there was not enough food. Some participants said that more food tended to go to male adults only when this was needed for their workload. However, it is important to note that different participants in the same site disagreed on household priorities. For example, at one site in Angola, middle aged men said children were prioritised in household distribution, while middle aged women said men were prioritised.<sup>27</sup>

## Biological and social needs

Participants identified many dimensions that are at least partially related to biological needs: adequate food, clothing, shelter, water, sanitation, and health care all directly relate to biological needs. Of course many other dimensions, such as physical security, employment, income, and assets, can be used to fulfil individual biological needs, but these dimensions serve many other functions as well.

However, there is an irreducibly social aspect to both poverty and hardship as identified by participants.<sup>28</sup> Some

26. This can be read in two ways. It might mean that because women bear responsibility for child care and rearing, they feel worse when this task is not completed. Alternatively, it might mean that women are generally more empathetic, especially towards children, and therefore care more when children suffer, irrespective of their social responsibilities.

27. See Angola Phase One report.

28. This echoes the views of Adam Smith and more recently Peter Townsend that poverty is in part about the inability to participate in the social life of the community. See: Smith, A. (1863) *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*. A. and C. Black. Also see: Townsend, P. (1979) *Poverty in the United Kingdom: a survey of household resources and standards of living*. University of California Press.

of the social aspects are highlighted in the dimensions that participants identify as constituting poverty. For example, clothing and smell are ubiquitous in the reports as indicators of poverty. Another social aspect was revealed when participants said that poor people are characterised by not having anyone they can depend on. Participants of all ages said of elderly individuals in particular that they had no spouses or children who could provide support and that this either caused or constituted their poverty. Multiple groups of participants identified shame from activities undertaken as a result of poverty (such as begging), living situations (such as in or near garbage dumps), or their treatment by others (such as insults and abuse by other communities), or from their need to borrow from neighbours, as being primary hardships they face.

Many participants said that one characteristic of being in poverty is being unable to contribute to others both in formal community functions such as weddings and funerals and also through informal mechanisms. Conversely, those who are not poor are not hampered from participating fully in community functions or supporting friends and community members when needed.

## Vulnerability and exploitation

One common theme from a range of participants was a concern not just with immediate material need, but with individual, household, and community vulnerability. In some cases, individuals are vulnerable to exploitation by others. In other cases, they may be vulnerable as a result of other potential risks and threats. For example, many participants access electricity through informal arrangements. Participants viewed these arrangements to be problematic not only because it was difficult to procure the necessary energy, but also because such arrangements made participants vulnerable to the whims of the provider, who might turn the electricity off without notice, charge higher rates than expected, or deny requests for access.

## Differences across sites

There is an unsurprising difference between the responses of participants in rural and urban areas, although it only appears in a few dimensions. Most prominently, rural participants are more likely to highlight the importance of ownership of and access to land. Urban participants may discuss property and property rights, but it is much less common than in rural sites. Rural participants are also more likely than their urban counterparts to emphasise the distance of services, the quality and cost of transportation as well as the lack of employment

opportunities, although some urban participants do address the cost and quality of transportation. Urban participants are most likely to discuss noise, pollution, and exposure to vices.

The level of deprivation that is associated with poverty in a given site is also sensitive to expectations, which are shaped at least in part by one's location. For example, in Malawi the poor are identified as not having even a mat to sleep on, while in other sites they are identified as not having a bed to sleep on. The relevant dimension of deprivation appears the same but thresholds may vary based upon the prevailing standards in the community.

In some sites, especially urban and marginalised, participants were much more likely to discuss issues not present in other sites—the dangerous, degraded, and polluted environment, for example, or social exclusion and a lack of citizenship, disrespect, and threats to property.

## Differences across participants

Many dimensions of deprivation were common to all participants. But some participants were more likely to mention or prioritise certain dimensions, and these were linked to gendered roles, responsibilities and experiences. Men were more likely to identify productive capital (farm implements, ability to borrow), formal employment, and access to electricity as dimensions of deprivation. Female participants were more likely to discuss education, health care, and an inability to care for their families. Female participants were also more likely to identify the lack of small assets, being subject to sexual exploitation, and the lack of children or productive partners as constitutive of poverty. Female participants more commonly identified sanitation, access to sanitary pads/products and access to adequate contraception as important.

Sometimes when discussing the same dimension of deprivation, men and women would identify it for different reasons. For example, bad roads and infrastructure were identified by men as obstacles to market access and productive economic activity, while women were more likely to highlight limits on their mobility and safety that resulted from bad, unlit roads.

Elderly participants appear slightly more likely to highlight the importance of social relations, and in particular the existence of others who can be depended on to provide support, as dimensions of deprivation. They are also less able to cope when immediate infrastructure, including shelter and roads, are not adequate, whereas younger participants are less affected by these deprivations.

Middle-aged participants appear most affected by the burdens of caring for and supporting others for whom they have responsibility. Women and men both note the difficulty in providing food for their families, finding adequate work and income, protecting the family from

hardship and deprivation. But, as noted above, their responsibilities differ, with women more commonly responsible for education, health and work in the home.

Young participants are the most likely to express concern over education, especially its quality and availability. They also highlight concern with a lack of decent employment opportunities, and the risks and likelihood of being exposed to crime, sex work or sexual exploitation, especially for women, if such opportunities are not available.

Similarly situated participants did not speak with one voice. While on some points there was considerable agreement, participants often disagreed in their responses to key questions. It is not as though all members of a single age and gender group share the same views, which differ greatly from those of other groups. Rather, we can at most detect different points of emphasis and different priorities based on age, gender and other features of personal identity.

## Striking findings

In many but not all sites, participants viewed the household as an appropriate unit of analysis in assessing poverty. For example, in the Indonesian site Gunung Rancak, one male participant summed up a common belief among participants, that “if one is poor, the whole family is poor”. However, despite many participants stating that ‘poverty’ is commonly shared among household members, participants nearly universally noted that the content of deprivation can differ by age and gender. The differential content of this deprivation was largely determined by differentiated social roles and individual needs. For example, in some sites participants reported that men bore a disproportionate burden from unemployment because they were expected to provide for the family. In other sites participants suggested that women bore a disproportionate burden when food or water was scarce because they were responsible for feeding and cleaning the children. It is important to note that these social roles bring an important affective component to the deprivation: it is not just that the woman is frequently expected to care for the children, and thus bears greater burdens when resources are scarce. She will feel much worse if her children are deprived.

Several dimensions of poverty or hardship were identified that are rarely addressed in the literature about poverty, gender and measurement. One dimension, which we provisionally called *vice*, tracks exposure to drug use, alcoholism, large groups of inactive and unemployed people, prostitution and crime.<sup>29</sup> Many participants clearly identified clothing, physical appearance, and smell as components of poverty—this was partially about biological need (for example, a lack of footwear can lead

to pain and illness) but mostly about social standing. Being able to dress, present oneself and appear in a way that permitted one an acceptable level of standing in the community. Participants forcefully highlighted the importance of infrastructure, especially roads and transportation, and the importance of reliable access to it at a reasonable cost. Interestingly, many participants, and especially women in Angola, identified a lack of official identification as a very important deprivation in its own right, which also instrumentally affected their ability to access important goods and services. Finally, many female participants raised issues of sexual exploitation. The concern was not only about sexual violence *per se* (an issue which has received more significant treatment in public discourse) but about coercive sexual arrangements—women having to take older partners to receive economic support, or being pressured into early marriages. In some cases women also noted the hardship of being deprived of sexual relations because partners were having sex with prostitutes or other partners.

## Implications for measurement

The first phase research has a number of direct implications for measurement.

First, measurement should, insofar as possible, be scalar, reflecting the variety of levels of deprivation that can occur.

Second, measurement should, insofar as possible, take account of the cost, quality, and reliability of access to goods and services.

Third, insofar as possible, measurement should be multidimensional.

Fourth, insofar as possible, it should be context-sensitive. To maintain comparability across contexts, this could be done in two ways. Evaluation of deprivation in a given dimension should be made contingent on context. For example, whether one has adequate shelter should be sensitive in part to local weather conditions. Additional survey modules, and thus indicators, should be added in regions where the dimension under consideration is important.

Fifth, insofar as possible, measurement should be agent-sensitive—that is, measurement should take into account, insofar as possible, the different needs of individuals. For example, income poverty lines might be sensitive to the cost of contraception and sanitary pads for those individuals who need them. Measurements of deprivations in health, income, nutrition etc. could be outcome

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<sup>29</sup> In the second phase ranking exercise, we moved to the language of “freedom from the disruptive behaviours of others” to clarify that the *vice* to be avoided was not one’s own and to avoid stigmatising language that might skew participant evaluation.

based, so as to account for differential human needs. For example, indicators of nutrition might look at outcomes, such as weight, height, iron in blood, etc. rather than caloric intake.

Given these initial implications for how deprivation should be measured, the second phase of research sought to identify those dimensions of deprivation which should be included in a multidimensional measure. The next chapter reviews this process.