



The Role of PPAs in Understanding Poverty and Inequality in the Caribbean

Presented at the IDEAS Global Assembly
Barbados

Mc Donald Thomas
Operations Officer - Social Analyst
Social Sector Division
Caribbean Development Bank

May 8, 2013



Structure of Presentation

- Characteristics of Caribbean Countries
- Overview of Country Poverty Assessments
- Overview of Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPA)
- PPA Findings
- Use of Findings
- Conclusions
- Recommendations



Characteristics of Caribbean Countries

- Small populations and narrow economic base
- Few natural resources
- Open volatile economies
- High debt levels
- Vulnerable to external shocks
- High youth and increasing ageing population
- High unemployment and underemployment
- Relatively high and persistent poverty
- Increase in social problems



Country Poverty Assessments (CPAs)

- CDB has assisted 15 of its Borrowing Member Countries since 1995 to conduct CPAs.

<http://www.caribank.org/publications-and-resources/poverty-assessment-reports-2>

- CDB-supported CPAs consist of four main components based on two types of approaches (The CDB Model):
 - Quantitative approach:
 - Survey of Living Conditions and Household Budget Survey
 - Qualitative approach:
 - Macro Economic and Social Analysis
 - **Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA)**
 - Institutional Analysis



Participatory Poverty Assessments

- The PPAs have two components:
 - Training
 - Workshops in participatory research methods for Field Facilitators (FF)
 - Supporting progress during field activities
 - Formal and informal interaction with FFs and other stakeholders
 - Research
 - Participatory research methods for data collection and analysis:
 - Transect walks, Observation sheet, Key informants interviews, FG discussions, Community workshops



Role of PPAs

- SLC/HBS ... answers the “what” questions.
 - Level and severity of poverty and inequality based on national poverty lines
 - Demographic features of the poor and indigent
 - Income distribution and the level of income inequality
- PPA ... explain the “what” and answers some of the “why” questions.
 - people’s understanding of poverty and inequality
 - different types of hardships experienced
 - what is involved in living in poverty by those who do



What is Poverty

- A disease
 - “...a mental disease, misery, stress and anxiety”
 - “...like cancer, it sleeps and sleeps and then like a snail crawling it eats away at you”
- Dependency
 - “...when you don’t own anything and have to depend on people”
 - “... when you have to depend on the State for necessities”
- Lack
 - “...when you have neither front or back”
 - “...When you down and out, below bottom”



Types of Poverty

- Relative Poverty
 - “I poor yes, but there are others who worse off ”
 - “I poor, but I not poor, poor”
- Structural Poverty
 - “when banana was green gold money was circulating, and we lived good, but it ain’t so now”
- Seasonal or Transient Poverty
 - “depending on the season, we move in and out of poverty”
- Inter-generational Poverty
 - “...my grandmother was poor, my mother was poor, I am poor and my children going to dead poor”
 - “I was born in poverty, I grew up in poverty and I still in poverty”



Why are people poor?

- Unemployed and /or underemployed
 - “...a lot of people unemployed. De men can’t find work so no money”
 - “...I get a salary but due to the high cost of living it can’t meet my needs”
- Low levels of education and skills
 - “We don’t have skills”
 - “I had to drop out of school because of pregnancy”
- Poor housing conditions
 - “having to live in poor housing conditions”
 - “seven people living in a house designed for three or four people”



Effects of Poverty

- Hunger
 - “we sometime go hungry, no food to eat”
 - “sometime ah don’t have nothing to give the children to eat”
- Emotional pain
 - “I worry about everything but nobody feels my pain”
 - “sometimes I feel so depressed”
- Anger and frustration
 - “I am angry about my situation”
 - “I am frustrated cause I am helpless and there is nothing I can do. Sometimes I think about committing suicide”



Effects of Poverty cont'd

- Dream killer
 - “you are forced to put aside your dreams”
 - “It hard to imagine the future, there is no inspiration and income not enough for long term planning”
- Inferiority and helplessness
 - “It make you feel lower than other people, they look at you as if you don't count”
 - “I am a man who never was”
 - “I can't improve my life the way I want to, I am helpless and powerless”



Gender differences

– Women

- “I normally experience sleeplessness. I lie awake many hours thinking about ways I can get money to provide meals for my children in the morning, and how would I be able to send them to school”
- “Go with a man to get a dollar to feed the children”

– Men

- “A man can’t live in poverty and be a man”
- “it make you feel less like a man”



Inequality

- Income Inequality
 - “men up there got millions, men down here got coppers”
 - “when you poor you just don’t have access to financial resources”
- Social Inequality
 - Stigma and discrimination
 - “we are poor so we have no rights”
 - “have to change my address to get a job”
 - Voicelessness
 - “when you are poor your input and decisions are not considered”
 - Lack of opportunities
 - “poor people have few opportunities, we miss out on them”



Inequality cont'd

- Structural Inequality
 - “The System”
 - “the way the system is what got things so, it designed to keep us poor”
 - Political Affiliation
 - “when it comes to jobs you could be as bright as a bulb, as long as you belong to the wrong party you will be overlooked“
 - Class
 - “decisions are made for one set of people, those in the upper classes”
 - “we are not equal to others who have, we are third class citizens”
 - Age
 - “my age is a barrier to get a job. Every time I go for a job, they ask me my age and when I tell them, they say they need a younger person”
 - “when facing the financial institutions according to your gage the interest is higher”



Coping and Survival Strategies

- Thrift
 - “we stretch and pinch what we have”
- Multiple jobs
 - “odd jobs here and there “
 - “hustling to get a daily bread”
- Help from family and friends
 - “neighbours will share food, clothes and even small sums of money”
 - “thank God for family and friends overseas otherwise plenty of we would be worst off”
- Assistance from Gov’t agencies, Churches, NGOs etc
- “Underground activities”
 - “the road to survival is risky but you do what you have to do to survive”
 - “steal, gamble. If you don’t have the money to buy food and pay bill, you have to get it somewhere”



Use of Findings

- **Governments' Pro-poor Policies, Strategies and programmes**
 - Addressing specific poverty issues in national development strategies.
 - Belize - National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan (from 1997)
 - Dominica - Growth and Social Protection Strategy
 - Grenada and St. Kitts and Nevis – Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategies
 - Antigua and Barbuda and St. Lucia – National Poverty Reduction Strategies
 - Reforming traditional social protection programmes
 - Belize - BOOST (CCT) programme
 - Targetted and specific poverty reduction projects
- **In designing programmes and projects funded by Development organisations like CDB**
 - Social analysis of these project draw extensively of CPA information.



Conclusions

- CPAs have produced significant amounts of data on poverty and inequality.
- PPAs give voice to the poor... for them to explain how their lives are affected by poverty.
- Data from the PPAs have increased our understanding of how poverty and inequality interact to create, reinforce and perpetuate poverty.
- They have also provided specific information about the concerns and needs of poor individuals and households.



Recommendations

- Some of this information has been used to formulate national policies and strategies, but greater attention needs to be given to the qualitative data that come out of the PPAs.
- PPAs and similar participatory research methods also provide valuable information on the effectiveness of policies and the outcomes of strategies and programmes:
 - more extensive training is needed in each country to create a critical mass of individuals with the knowledge and skills in using such participatory research methods.
 - In addition to quantitative research methods, PPA-type research should be used in evaluating development policies, programmes and projects.

Thank You !