

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL

**Developing a Poverty Index for African Economies
using the Consensual Approach: The Case of
Mashonaland West, Zimbabwe**

November 2008

by

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**Developing a Poverty Index for African economies
using the Consensual Approach: The Case of
Mashonaland West, Zimbabwe**

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**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
(Development Studies) in the Faculty of Community and Development Disciplines,
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.**

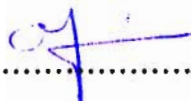
27 November 2008

Supervisor: Professor Julian D. May

Declaration

I declare that this is my own unaided work, except the acknowledged assistance and referenced citations. It has not been submitted for any previous degree at any university.

Date: 27 November 2008

Signature.....

Name: Oliver Mtapuri

Abstract

This thesis is articles-based submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It consists of articles that were submitted and published, and others that were submitted and awaiting comments.

This thesis makes a contribution to the ongoing debate on the most appropriate method of measuring poverty for interventionist purposes in rural areas. It is informed by the Zimbabwe experience that income-based measures may not always adequately target those most in need of social support. A new approach is posited that focuses on the non-income component of poverty. The aim is to assist 'technocrats' to better target the poor in need of a social safety net in crisis situations. The search is for a 'credible' measure that will be acceptable to various interest groups including the poor. Thus the proposed measure derived by means of a *consensual approach* meets this objective.

The literature review describes and discusses the weaknesses of conventional poverty measures, divided into two broad categories of those pre- and post-dating Sen's introduction of the capability concept. The thesis then uses these to explore the conventional approaches (the dominant income measures) and flag their operational deficiencies, and then postulates an asset threshold model, the *minimally adequate asset level* (MAAL), based on the *consensual approach*. It also postulates the Poverty Diagnostic Model (PDM) which helps to describe and analyse factors that impact poverty at the individual level and helps in unpacking the linkages between the determinants of poverty given its multi-dimensionality and how these are conditioned by both internal and external factors.

Additionally to the contributions, this thesis posits drawing asset-poverty lines as well as combined asset and income poverty lines as a new contribution to yield *asset-based Foster-Greer-Thorbecke (FGT) index*, *asset-income FGT index*, *networth FGT index* and *asset-gini coefficient*. It also provides new tools with differentiating capacity to identify those who are either asset poor or income poor or both; as well as those who are 'networth poor', understood as asset-income threshold less debt. It advocates scaling of assets to enable capturing of the asset-holding of the poorest of the poor to form intensity scales on which an asset threshold is based.

A further contribution of this thesis is the introduction of the notion of enclivity within a family around husband/wife relationships as a new form of resilience/collectivity due to deepening poverty. There is evidence to suggest that ethics and networks breakdown as a result of poverty.

The final contribution of this thesis is the definition of a poverty line on the basis of an asset threshold using the *consensual approach* as postulated by Mack and Lansley (1985): thus this thesis posits an *asset-by-asset point index*.

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I absolve them of any errors that may still remain in this thesis, for which I take full responsibility.

I owe it to myself for embarking on this project, for which I thank God and myself, without any regrets.

Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome
BACOSI	Basic Commodities and Supply Side Interventions
BEAM	Basic Education Assistance Module
BNI	Basic Needs Index
CC	Christian Care
CCZ	Consumer Council of Zimbabwe
CODESRIA	Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CPM	Capability Poverty Measure
CSFP	Child Supplementary Feeding Programme
CSO	Central Statistical Office
CZI	Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries
EMCOZ	Employers' Confederation of Zimbabwe
ERHS	Ethiopian Rural Household Survey
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
ESPP	Enhanced Social Protection Programme
EU	European Union
FFD	Free Food Distribution
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGT	Foster-Greer-Thorbecke

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLS	Grain Loan Scheme
GMB	Grain Marketing Board
GoZ	Government of Zimbabwe
HBM	Health Belief Model
HDI	Human Development Index
HH	Household
HIV	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
HPI	Human Poverty Index
IFAD	International Food and Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MAAL	Minimally Adequate Asset Level
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MERP	Millennium Economic Recovery Programme
MFI	Multilateral Financial Institution
MIQ	Minimal Income Question
NAC	National AIDS Council
NECF	National Economic Consultative Forum
NERP	National Economic Revival Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund

PAPM	Precaution Adoption Process Model
PDI	Proportional Deprivation Index
PDL	Poverty Datum Line
PDM	Poverty Diagnostic Model
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PPA	Participatory Poverty Appraisal
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PQLI	Physical Quality of Life Index
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRHS	Pakistan Rural Household Survey
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategic Programme
PW	Public Works
RBZ	Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe
SDF	Social Development Fund
SIRDC	Scientific Industrial and Research and Development Centre
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Scientists
TNF	Tri-partite Negotiating Forum
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
SADC	Southern African Development Community
WB	World Bank
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front

ZCT	Zimbabwe Council of Tourism
ZIMPREST	Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation
ZIMTA	Zimbabwe Teachers Association
ZINA	Zimbabwe Nurses Association
ZNCC	Zimbabwe National Chambers of Commerce
ZTNDP	Zimbabwe Transitional National Development Plan

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.0 THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This thesis is informed by the Zimbabwean experience. It makes its entrée into the poverty measurement and alleviation by examining the need for appropriate measures to guide the provision of targeted social relief in Zimbabwe, the difficulties with purely money-metric or cash based approaches, the need to consider the role played by assets, and the need for poverty measurements to be based on local consensus(es) to achieve a minimally accepted standard of living steeped in local norms and practices. My argument deals with a common problem facing decision makers: the difficulty of managing development when confronted by a range of ad hoc policies and challenges of trying to use conventional poverty measures when it comes to deciding which areas should become recipients of poverty relief when the poverty measures, for instance, are not comparable.

I argue that existing methodologies for poverty measurement are not very helpful when trying to target interventions that try to identify poor areas. For instance, by focussing on income (headcounts, Human Poverty Index), these measures do not take into account, for instance, people's underlying asset base, bartering, income in kind, access to communal resources, or public provision of services. The Human Development Index developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) cannot be disaggregated to a local level and so does not offer a solution. An approach is needed that is better tailored to the conditions found in Africa.

I draw on the work of Amartya Sen and the United Nations Development Programme regarding indices as well as prominent authors (not in any particular order) on the topic such as James Foster, Joel Greer, Erik Thorbecke, Joanna Mack, and Stewart Lensley, Martin Ravallion, Julio Boltivnik, Leyden School, Robert Havemann, Desai Meghnad, Michael Carter, Felix Naschold, Michelle Adato, Julian May, Mona Mowafi, George Agüero, Peter Townsend, Kathleen Short, Nanak Kakwani, Klaas de Vos, Thesia Garner,

Bjorn Hallerod, Martha Nussbaum and others. The method used to measure poverty in this enquiry is the *Consensual Approach*¹. It is argued in this thesis that the *Consensual Approach* is informed by local conditions. Firstly, I shall look at the Zimbabwe economy as it provides the setting.

1.1 THE ECONOMY

According to the United Nations Development Programme (2004) between 1980 and 1990, the Government of Zimbabwe sought to address the economic inequities existing in the economy through the ‘*Growth with Equity*’ strategy of 1981, the *Zimbabwe Transitional National Development Plan* (1982 – 1985) as well as the *Zimbabwe first five year National Development plan* (1986 – 1990). These plans gave priority to poverty reduction and increased social sector expenditure which included subsidisation of primary health care and making primary school enrolment almost universal, such that by 1995 Zimbabwe had reached a net enrolment rate of 86 per cent (United Nations Development Programme, 2004).

However, things began to change for the worse in the 1990s due to droughts and the *Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP)* of 1990 – 1995 which saw poverty increasing and real Gross Domestic Product growth averaging 1.5 per cent per year during the period 1991-1995 (United Nations Development Programme, 2004:11).

ESAP was replaced by the *Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST)* in 1998 which purported to provide a home-grown solution. The lack of resources to implement the package undermined its implementation (United Nations Development Programme, 2004). In 2001 the *Millennium Economic Recovery Programme* was launched to arrest the deteriorating economic performance

¹ The consensual approach is a methodology towards determining a threshold in which public opinion is used via a ballot to determine socially perceived necessities of life. It can be used for both income and assets. Voting was the method used in this study. People can vote for the amount (or things) that they think is minimally acceptable to avoid poverty in the same way as it can be used to determine a minimally adequate asset level. Middleton (2000) notes that consensus can also be reached through discussion, negotiation and eventual agreement.

with the objective of addressing the underlying macro-economic fundamentals. But this programme did not work as international donors started to withdraw (United Nations Development Programme, 2004). In February 2003, another stabilisation programme, the *National Economic Revival Programme (NERP): Measures to Address the Current Challenges*, was launched. The severe macro-economic problems persisted: high inflation², increasing poverty, foreign currency shortages, poor capacity utilisation, decline in local and foreign direct investment and a general decline in Gross Domestic Product growth rate.

In November 2004, the Government of Zimbabwe introduced yet another plan, the *Macro-economic Policy Framework 2005-2006: Towards Sustained Economic Growth*. The aim of the new plan was to focus on strategies to address the critical challenges of reducing inflation, generating foreign currency, increasing capacity utilisation, developing infrastructure and increasing service delivery (Government of Zimbabwe, 2004).

By 2008, the country's economy was on a freefall characterised by hyperinflation, rapid depreciation of the Zimbabwe dollar, foreign currency shortages, company closures, rising unemployment, droughts, HIV/AIDS pandemic, political and economic isolation, the brain drain, food shortages, sanctions, and political intolerance and polarisation. According to the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe inflation is at 231 million per cent (see Table 1 below).

² According to the Government of Zimbabwe (2004) during the implementation of NERP, inflation continued on an upward trend reaching 598.7% in December 2003 before peaking at 622.4% by January 2004.

Table 1: Inflation trends 1990 – July 2008

Year	Month	All Items CPI	Monthly Price Increases	Year on Year Price Increases
1990		29.6		15.5
2000		469.6		55.9
2007		12562581.7		6723.7
2008	Jan	974925192.9	120.83%	100580.16%
	Feb	2201964728.0	125.86%	164900.29%
	Mar	8395791848.8	281.29%	417823.13%
	Apr	26240307207.5	212.54%	650599.00%
	May	139964814259.6	433.40%	2233713.43%
	June	1314718233514.3	839.30%	11268758.90%
	July	35500566912457.9	2600.24%	231150888.87%

Source: Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (2008)³

In August 2008 the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) lopped off ten zeros from Zimbabwe's currency, making \$10 billion equivalent to \$1 and this was a second such reform on currency in two years: the RBZ had cut off six zeros in August 2006⁴.

According to the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (2008)⁵

the tight grip of the declared and undeclared sanctions is being felt throughout the entire economy. The Multilateral Financial Institutions (MFIs), such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have cancelled lines of credit as well as humanitarian assistance, and humanitarian infrastructural development support, which further worsens the plight of the poor nations which results in deteriorating standards of living affecting the lives of innocent children, the disabled and physically handicapped, through denial of medical equipment, drugs, and food.

³ Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (2008), Inflation rates, Retrieved on 12 November 2008 from <http://www.rbz.co.zw/about/inflation.asp>

⁴ Herald, 8 August 2008, 'Tackle inflation or zeros will resurface: economists' <http://www.herald.co.zw/inside.aspx?sectid=210&cat=10> accessed 8 August 2008

⁵ Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (2008) Impact of sanctions against Zimbabwe, Retrieved on 8 November 2008 from <http://www.herald.co.zw/inside.aspx?sectid=605&cat=1>

Shepherd et al. (2004:19) contend that ‘economic growth is critical for social protection: it provides both the additional incomes which allow private and informal transfers and mutual support, but also the basis for public revenues which can be used as insurance and for basic social security to enhance the quality of the life of the citizens’. Times of economic crisis are characterised by a dwindling revenue base as companies close down resulting in a loss of corporate tax. Moreover, as individuals lose their jobs there is loss of individual incomes and pay-as-you-earn tax. Both the formal and informal social-protection systems are threatened as is the case in Zimbabwe.

The net effect of all the actions (the droughts, sanctions and resultant economic meltdown) includes:

- Denial of medication to the unborn child;
- Poor rural folks not able to grind their maize;
- School children not able to go to school;
- Transport system grinding to a halt;
- Workers walking to work because of fuel shortages; and
- Blackouts due to electricity outages among many other ailments induced by sanctions (Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, 2008).

Against such a backdrop, I argue that the management and delivery of social safety nets requires continuous learning process leading to the development of new sets of tools to measure poverty taking cognisance of location-specific nuances and the dynamism of the state of affairs.

1.2 THE ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS THESIS

This thesis makes original contribution claims in the following areas:

- It postulates an asset-threshold for poverty that can be used to count the poor. Poverty will be defined as a shortfall from the asset-threshold, the *minimally adequate asset level (MAAL)*. This asset-threshold, however, is not

transferable to other spaces if typicality cannot be established, that is, it is context and location specific.

- In this thesis I introduce and pioneer a Poverty Diagnostic Model (PDM). The PDM is a model that helps to describe and analyse factors that impact poverty at the individual level, advocates the creation of community structures for poverty diagnosis, counselling and mentoring, sifts and selects the poor into typologies via self and community mediation and supports innovators and entrepreneurs. The PDM helps in unpacking the linkages between the determinants of poverty given its multi-dimensionality and how these are conditioned by both internal and external factors. Thus, the PDM is envisaged to be a useful tool for defining and assessing poverty and for the management of poverty programmes aimed at reducing vulnerability and poverty within poor communities. The use of the PDM will inform the decision either to overhaul behaviours or perceptions for the good of the individual and society as a whole.
- With a focus on the Foster-Greer-Thorbecke (FGT) class of measures, this thesis posits drawing asset poverty lines as well as combined asset and income poverty lines as a new contribution to yield asset-based FGT indices, *asset-income FGT*, *networth FGT* and *asset gini coefficient*. It builds on available literature on the subject and argues here that assets do matter and represent the missing link in the measurement of poverty inasmuch as they are critically important in poverty alleviation initiatives. The new tools that are being introduced have differentiating capacity to identify those who are either asset poor or income poor or both; as well as those who are ‘networth poor’, understood as asset-income threshold less debt. The tools also enable the observation of inequalities on the basis of assets, income, and a combination of assets and income. Another contribution of the thesis is the notion of scaling of assets to enable capturing of the asset-holding of the poorest of the poor to form intensity scales on which an asset threshold is based. Dissatisfaction with current practice which has mainly focused on income

(based on a poverty line) and capabilities (which do not rely on a poverty line) has prompted the pioneering of these tools.

- The introduction of the notion of enclivity within a family is another primary contribution of this thesis. The research suggests that due to deepening poverty, people create enclaves around husband/wife relationships as a new form of resilience/collectivity. The poor suffer from a lack of assets and ethics and networks break down as a result of poverty. The results suggest, as elsewhere, that poverty is multidimensional.
- The thesis defined an asset-threshold – the *minimally adequate asset level* (MAAL); valued it and drew an asset poverty line against which a household can be considered poor if it falls below it. To the best of my knowledge this thesis represents the first attempt to define an asset-threshold using the *consensual approach* – principally using a European method in an African context. It fills a gap in the measurement of poverty by defining a context-sensitive, fixed bundle of assets – the *minimally adequate asset level*. This thesis has managed to transform the asset-threshold from a theoretical plane to a practical platform. Thus, the MAAL reflects the people’s conception of necessary assets to achieve a socially acceptable standard of living based on consensus.
- This thesis also pioneers an *asset-by-asset point index* which represents a simple methodology that uses inputs of well-being rather than outputs to count the poor on a point basis, household by household. It focuses on assets which are a significant aspect of well-being in whose absence households may fall into deprivation. The index is expected to yield quick results and is easy to communicate to policy-makers and ordinary users. It is good for the production of localised indicators as it allows disaggregation of data by rural/urban divide and even at the village/household level. It can facilitate area-based interventions. It is an asset-based measure which will help to identify the poor and the type of help they need, and thus, can be used as a monitoring tool at the household and community levels. It represents an alternative approach to measuring household poverty.

1.3 HYPOTHESIS AND RESEARCH QUESTION

While the abiding theme of this work is poverty alleviation and targeting in poor African countries such as Zimbabwe, the hypothesis central to this study can be stated as follows:

Hypothesis: While income may be an aspect of poverty in Africa, access to assets is important in a self-definition of poverty that uses local norms as the measure of well-being.

Accordingly, the other questions that will be subjected to interrogation include:

- What factors affect perceptions of poverty and thus should be taken into account in a consensual approach to poverty?
- What is the *minimally adequate asset level* that a person must have for him or her not to be considered poor?
- Is there a measurable threshold of assets that constitutes poverty?
- How many and what kind of assets do people need not to be poor?

1.4 AIMS OF THE THESIS

The study had one overarching objective: To establish an asset-threshold using the *consensual approach* through the eyes and experiences of the people of Mashonaland West in a self-definition of poverty which uses local norms as the measure of well-being.

Because this thesis is articles-based, I have located the methodology preemptively in the following section of Chapter 1 to cover the rest of chapters because all of them draw their findings from the same data set. I have done this firstly to avoid repetition in the thesis on methodology and, secondly to show the distinctiveness and preserve the scholastic integrity of each as ‘stand-alones’.

1.5 DATA AND EMPIRICAL METHODOLOGY

1.5.1 The research setting

Data was collected in Mhondoro communal area which is located in Mashonaland West province in Zimbabwe. This rural area is situated 40 kilometres from Harare, the Capital City of Zimbabwe. Villagers in the area grow plants and keep animals for day-to-day living. This communal area was chosen, firstly, because the area reflects a social landscape that is rural – this was one of the fundamental conditions underlying the quest for an asset-threshold steeped in a rural setting. Secondly, the researcher’s familiarity with the location as well as knowledge of the local language, Shona, which is critical in understanding the perceptions of poverty and how these relate to assets. Shona is the dominant language spoken in this province. Familiarity with the location brings in some element of purposiveness in terms of site selection.⁶

According to the 2002 Census carried out by the Government of Zimbabwe, the total population of Mashonaland West province was 1,224,670 comprising 609,778 males and 614,892 females. About 72 per cent of the population of the province lived in rural areas while 28 per cent resided in the urban areas. The average household size was four persons. In terms of the type of dwelling units, 32 per cent of the households live in traditional dwelling units, while 40 per cent occupied modern dwelling units and the rest occupied a mixed type of dwelling units⁷.

⁶ Mashonaland West is not the only rural area representing a typical African setting. There could be other areas in Zimbabwe with similar conditions as elsewhere in Africa. This paper does not lay a claim to the generalisability of the results to the whole of Mashonaland West or Zimbabwe or Africa per se. Generalising results from case studies requires a judgment about the typicality of findings in the population about which a generalisation is made (Hammersley, 1992) cited in Shaffer (2002:48). According to Shaffer (2002) the crux of the issues lies in determining ‘typicality’ which in practice is very hard to do, especially given that the results [may be] highly contextual and may defy generalisation.

⁷ Traditional type of dwelling was an old style family settlement in which a number of buildings were made of poles and dagga/bricks with thatched roofs. Modern dwelling units were buildings of modern brick with a corrugated iron roof or tiles. Mixed-type were found in old settlements where one or more of the buildings were built of material more modern than pole and dagga/bricks and thatch. If one of the buildings was of brick with corrugated iron roof and the rest were pole and dagga, the type of dwelling was considered ‘mixed’.

About 66 per cent of the population had no electricity while 80 per cent of the population had access to safe water, either from piped water or from boreholes/protected wells. The remaining 20 per cent obtained water from unsafe sources such as unprotected wells, rivers and streams. In the 2002 Census, the Government of Zimbabwe observed that 74 per cent of the households in the province used wood for fuel, while 26 per cent used other forms of energy such as paraffin, electricity, gas and coal. Furthermore, according to the *Zimbabwe 2004 Indicator Monitoring – Labour Force Survey*, the population aged at least 15 years was 720 799⁸ for the province. Out of this group, 83.3 per cent were economically active and about 12 per cent were unemployed. Life characterised by attributes such as lack of electricity for a majority of households, living in traditional dwellings, widespread use of wood for fuel, fetching water from unsafe sources and subsistence farming exemplified a rural setting which satisfied one of the core conditions in this initiative.

1.5.2 Sample selection

A sample of 100 households from the rural area was selected using the systematic random sampling procedure by canvassing the same households in the three villages of Zimucha, Chakavanda and Washayanyika⁹ which participated in Poverty Assessment Study Survey II (PASS II) which was conducted by the Government of Zimbabwe in November 2003. PASS II used the same sampling procedure and provided the sampling frame.

Furthermore 25 households from the urban area of Chikonohono township in Chinhoyi were also selected solely for reasons of comparison¹⁰. Chinhoyi, which is located approximately 120 kilometres north-west of Harare, is the provincial capital of Mashonaland West. In both rural and urban areas, the head of the household was the

⁸ This figure constitutes the labour force of the province.

⁹ These villages shall, henceforth, collectively be called the rural area.

¹⁰ Sample sizes of 100 households for the rural area and 25 households for the urban area were informed by the limitations of the budget as well as time constraints. The sample sizes could be one of the limitations of this paper hence the analysis is also limited to descriptive statistics. It is not the ambition of this paper to generalise the findings.

chief respondent who was responsible for decision-making in the day-to-day running and management of the household affairs. A household was defined as a single person or a group of people, who usually live, cook and eat together, related or not related (Government of Zimbabwe, 2003). Data was collected from 10 December 2005 to 10 January 2006 at both rural and urban sites.

In terms of research design, the ballot (or poll or voting) was used in which people were given ballot papers as is done during parliamentary and presidential elections. Instead of voting for their member of parliament or president, they voted for the assets they deemed to be necessary to achieve an acceptable standard of living. All participants in the poll were given a unique number which was used to link their ballot papers to their demographic data. Each ballot paper had the name and picture of each asset. Three categories of ballot boxes were used for this purpose: Most Important, Important and Less Important. Accordingly, in the process of voting, participants were asked to place their ballot papers in the appropriate box. After the votes were cast, the ballots were counted before the assembly of villagers for validation.

Six focus groups in the rural areas and 3 in the urban area as well as interviews complemented the vote in this multi-method approach which collected both quantitative and qualitative data. Interviews were carried out covering demographic information as well as definitions of poor and rich persons. The first choice participants for Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were heads of household. In their absence any member of the community participated because assets are 'neutral'¹¹. Assets concerned those who had them as well as those who did not. On average, between 8 and 15 participants took part in the FGDs.

There were separate FGDs for males and females. The purpose of separating the males from the females was to allow the different genders to speak their minds freely. It was

¹¹ If the concern was income, the researcher would have involved primarily only income earners in the FGDs. During the main survey, six FGDs were held in the rural area: one adult male-only group; one adult female-only group; one adult mixed group; one youth-male group; and one youth-female group and one mixed youth group. In the urban area, only three FGDs were conducted as follows: one adult male-only group; one adult female-only group; one mixed youth group.

also of interest to delve into the different perspectives that men and women had on a subject and separation of genders allowed this¹². Mixed groups of both males and females were also used to affirm views, to engage men and women in debate (if there was such a debate) and to establish dominant views in constructive engagement. The mixed group FGD dealt with the issues of how many of the items they voted for were required to lead a minimally acceptable way of life as well as to determine the cost of each item.

Accordingly, FGDs were useful in the clarification and elaboration of social norms, experiences and practices; and providing a broad overview of perceptions of what constituted assets that were necessities of life for the people in the area. In the rural area, the list consisted of 32 items, while in the urban area it contained 37 items. These items were chosen by participants in FGDs after starting off with a short-list of 14 items¹³. In the urban area, the list excluded a cultivator and harrow mentioned in the rural area and also separated a mobile phone from a telephone as distinct assets. (See Chapter 8 on Page 157 for the full list of assets by location). The people selected these items as a broad yardstick by which the poor could assess their lifestyle.

1.5.3 Data analysis

In terms of the data analysis, frequencies, percentages and descriptive statistics were derived. All qualitative data were analysed for patterns, content, categories and major themes which form the basis for drawing out the logic and patterns underlying the responses.

1.6.0 Thesis structure

This thesis is organised into ten chapters. Each chapter represents a single-authored article either published or in the peer-review process. This implies that each chapter will end with references cited within it and appendices as necessary. The referencing style of

¹² Men and women may have different perspectives on say a house. Men may need a house, but women may look beyond a mere house to its quality as well. Males and females are not homogenous social categories in terms of needs and aspirations.

¹³ The preliminary list used in the urban and rural areas had the following 14 items: cattle, hut, land, plough, wheel-barrow, scotch cart, hoe, goats, spade, axe, bed, chickens, radio and donkey.

the journal has been followed where applicable and the remainder of the thesis uses Harvard Referencing style. All relevant correspondence related to these articles is attached in the main Appendix from page 208. Chapter One provides an overview of the argument of this thesis that existing methodologies for poverty measurement are not very helpful in identifying poor areas and guiding the provision of targeted social relief in Zimbabwe. It advocates considering the role played by assets, and the need for poverty measurements to be based on local consensus(es) to achieve a minimally accepted standard of living. It describes the Zimbabwean economy and outlines the original contributions of this thesis. Details of the aims, hypothesis, research questions and methodology of this academic enquiry are also contained in Chapter One.

Chapter Two provides the political context. This chapter provides the reader with the context within which this research took place. Although it was written within the discourse of social dialogue, this implies that it does not necessarily follow the theme of the rest of the thesis. This article was published in *Loyola Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol XX, No. 2, Jul-Dec 2006, pp. 149-170. During the course of the research, follow-up articles were published in the South African Labour Bulletin, Vol 30, Number 4, October/November 2006 and the South African Labour Bulletin, Vol 32, Number 1, March/April 2008. The latter are attached in the main appendix. Thus the chapter reviews social dialogue in Zimbabwe to further the understanding of it in a turbulent political environment. While trust, commitment and good faith are key ingredients for social dialogue, it is argued in this chapter that political specificities also matter. The research showed that social dialogue is a power game, in which partners engage in fights and re-fights for democratic and political space and the whole social dialogue project is susceptible to appropriation by the elites, opportunists as well as external forces making détente a distant dream. The thesis posits that social dialogue can work best in multiparty democratic environments rather than in almost bipolar (two party) democracies and that unless political issues are resolved, the socio-economic problems that Zimbabwe is currently facing will only exacerbate.

Chapter Three provides an overview of social safety-nets in Zimbabwe with critiques on their implementation. General characteristics are drawn from those insights and tabulated as guides to a learning process when targeting interventions.

Chapter Four¹⁴ builds upon the previous chapters by making an entrée into the need for appropriate measures to guide the provision of targeted social relief in Zimbabwe. The chapter questions the assumptions underlying the constructs of money-metric measures and their efficacy for measuring poverty in an African setting. It explores the conventional approaches (the dominant income measures) and flags their operational deficiencies, and it postulates an asset threshold model, the *minimally adequate asset level (MAAL)*, based on the consensual approach. This asset-threshold brings out particular specific and peculiar circumstances of the poor as well as providing a fresh perspective and framework for measuring poverty. Thus, the MAAL can be useful for purposes of allocating resources and setting monitoring targets.

Chapter Five¹⁵ introduces the *Poverty Diagnostic Model (PDM)* undergirded by the desire to understand the causal agents of poverty and to build a framework to understand the perceptions of poverty by the poor. The PDM has the potential to help to strategise the form and content of the targeted interventions and to articulate assumptions and hypotheses from which to generate new knowledge in poverty studies, inform policy and empower society with knowledge and a better standard of living. This chapter also covers issues relating to how the model can help in the analysis of norms that influence people's livelihood strategies by tapping on other social science disciplines such as psychology, health and sociology. The PDM requires psychologists to work in the realm of poverty with a new thrust that examines the root causes of poverty and perhaps engender, nurture and develop the required responses.

¹⁴ This article was accepted by the journal, *Development Southern Africa*, subject to amendments.

¹⁵ The article is being peer-reviewed at the journal, *Social Action*.

Chapter Six¹⁶ provides an extension of the Forter-Greer-Thorbecke index by introducing an index which takes into account assets, income and debt (liabilities) in the measurement of poverty. It introduces an asset-poverty line, asset-income poverty line, asset-gini coefficient, asset-income gini coefficient, as well as a networth FGT.

Chapter Seven¹⁷ interrogates the rich-poor schism based on qualitative data from the Mashonaland West study which needs to be investigated from the perspective, especially, of the poor in order to be able to do justice to the description and analysis of how people experience poverty. This thesis is nested in the tradition that resonates with the other theses that make a subjective link to poverty. In this chapter, it is argued that there is a need to address the rich-poor conceptual schism because of the differences in meaning that different people attach to these conceptions, especially the rich and the poor. It is also argued that it is important to understand local conceptions of poverty as a basis to find the points of departure for rural development work especially coming from the people who experience poverty. Furthermore, the chapter explores the role and importance of assets and establishes poverty typologies useful in the development of a poverty index for African economies.

Chapter Eight¹⁸ looks at the role of assets, arguing that they matter most in an African rural setting where a self-definition of poverty based on local norms and traditions, prevails. It defines an asset-poverty line based on Mashonaland West data, which is context-specific and determined by a bundle of natural/physical assets owned by people at a particular place and a particular time.

Chapter Nine breaks new ground by introducing an alternative index, the asset-by-asset point index, in the measurement of poverty arising from the problems associated with conventional methods that ignore assets. Furthermore, the exclusive use of the monetary

¹⁶ The article was published in *Loyola Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol XIX, No. 2, Jul-Dec 2005, pp. 245-259.

¹⁷ This article was accepted by *Development Africa*, a Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) publication, subject to amendments.

¹⁸ This article was accepted by the *Journal of International Development* subject to amendments.

approach in the measurement of poverty, which had gained common currency internationally, has not been useful for practical reasons in poor rural communities.

Chapter Ten concludes. It should be noted that all tables, footnotes and figures are in a computer-generated sequence from Chapter One to Chapter 10.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

SOCIAL DIALOGUE DISCORD: THE VIEWS OF KEY INFORMANTS IN THE CASE OF ZIMBABWE¹⁹

1.0 BACKGROUND

Proponents of social dialogue, who include the International Labour Organisation (ILO), have put forward the social dialogue discourse as possibly one of the viable and lucrative options for social partners to pursue in the interest of industrial harmony and peace and socio-economic development. The ILOa (n.d) defines social dialogue as:

...all types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy. It can be informal or institutionalised, and often it is a combination of the two. It can take place at the national, regional or at enterprise level. The main goal of social dialogue itself is to promote consensus building and democratic involvement among the main stakeholders in the world of work. (ILOb, n.d).

According to the ILO, 'successful social dialogue structures and processes have the potential to resolve important economic and social issues, encourage good governance, advance social and industrial peace and stability and boost economic progress' (ILOb, n.d). As such, social dialogue has been floated around the world as one among many ways countries can push-start their economies following periods of recession and as a vehicle for the generation of wealth and sustainable human development. The whole

¹⁹ This article was published in *Loyola Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol XX, No. 2, Jul-Dec 2006, pp. 149-170

dialogue process is then encapsulated into a social contract²⁰ with self-policing mechanisms.

A series of International Dialogues were kick-started by the Langkawi International Dialogue of 1995 in Malaysia following the creation of the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management by the Commonwealth Heads of Government. The basis of the partnership is *win-win*, tolerance, patience, shared vision and common goals among the social partners. In Zimbabwe, this led to the creation of the National Economic Consultative Forum (NECF) in July 1997 with the aim of enhancing social dialogue, consensus building and tension reduction by grouping together business, labour, government and academia. The idea was to deepen good governance and allow wider participation of society as well as developing capacity to monitor policy. The NECF had by December 1998 resolved to form a working party to work on a Social Contract, thus setting the stage for social dialogue in Zimbabwe.

Between 1980 and 1990, Zimbabwe flirted with socialist policies which imposed rigidities in the economy which in turn led to constrained growth. In order to kick-start the economy and give new impetus, the Government of Zimbabwe embarked on the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (1991-5), the Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (1996-2000) and thereafter, the Millennium Economic Recovery Programme (MERP). In spite of these programmes, the twin problems of unemployment and inflation have remained nagging and on the increase ever since. For example, the unemployment rate was estimated to be more than 70 per cent (*The Financial Gazette*, 17 July 2003b) and annualised inflation was hovering above 300 per cent (*The Financial Gazette*, 17 July 2003a). In 1998, the Government announced a devaluation of the Zimbabwe dollar from Z\$18.6 to the US dollar in December, 1997 to Z\$37.3 by December, 1998. Unbudgeted gratuities of Z\$50,000 each were awarded to the war veterans and at the same time Zimbabwe got embroiled and enmeshed in the DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo) war. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund

²⁰ The English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1678) coined the word, ‘social contract’ in his treatise, *Leviathan* (1651).

withdrew all multi-lateral aid assistance with other international donor agencies taking a cue therefrom. These factors imposed a heavy burden and strain on the economy leading to the development of a socio-economic crisis. As the crisis brewed, organised labour agitated workers for stayaways. Organised business, it appears, was in complicity to the extent that those involved in stayaways did not lose any of their benefits at work.

From that period onwards, confrontations and contestation and fighting and re-fighting for space can be observed between the workers and government, the workers at one time teaming up with employers confronting the state; employers on their own confronting the state and workers versus society at large, and patriots versus sell-outs, the left versus the left and the right versus the right. Thus, these challenges brought the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF) into prominence in an attempt to resolve these societal contradictions, thereby widening the social dialogue debate.

The TNF is chaired by the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare in line with ILO Convention 144 on tripartite consultation and includes the following ministries: Finance and Economic Development; Industry and International Trade; Lands and Agriculture and Rural Resettlement; Transport and Communication; Mines and Mining Development; Departments of State for Information and Public Enterprises. Business is led by the presidents of the Employers Confederation of Zimbabwe (EMCOZ). Business is drawn from the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries (CZI), Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce, Zimbabwe Chamber of Mines, Bankers Association of Zimbabwe, Commercial Farmers Union and the Zimbabwe Council of Tourism. The Presidents of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) leads labour. Leaders of the following staff associations also attend TNF under the leadership of the ZCTU, namely, Civil Service Staff Associations, Zimbabwe Teachers Association (ZIMTA) and the Zimbabwe Nurses Association. At inception it was agreed that the TNF was not a decision-making body although it could conclude binding protocols based on good faith and trust and the subordination of sector interests to national goals. Suffice to say at this juncture that Zimbabwe is a member of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) which itself is a member of the United Nations family.

There are costs of agreeing and costs of not agreeing. Who bears the costs? It has been the general citizenry that has been bearing most of the costs. According to Sachikonye (1997:125):

In the continuing tight economic situation, it is necessary to strike a balance between wage demands and employment security and productivity. In the absence of a significant increase in productivity, and therefore enterprise profitability, real wages and living standards will continue to stagnate and decline. Wage concessions made as a consequence of strikes will be short-lived, and probably inadequate to meet increased costs of living,

This statement was made with reference to the period immediately after Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (1991-5) as a challenge facing unions in the 1990s. It is more pertinent now than before given the negative growth rates being posted continually by the economy.

Sachikonye (1997:127) further asserts that:

...unions will have to clarify their strategic role in the economy and society as a whole. What direction should its relations with the state and capital take: one of tension or one of accommodation?

This is a complicated question but it raises the possibilities of a social contract based on a corporatist arrangement. As ZCTU secretary general (Morgan Tsvangirayi) has argued, there is clearly a need to develop the thinking of the basis and scope of a social contract. The then Secretary General of the ZCTU stated “ ...the social contract would involve the three parties reaching a consensus where workers agree to restrain wage demands on one hand and employers agree to control price increases for commodities, invest surpluses to create more jobs and train workers on the other hand. For the Government, you would expect them to cut spending.

2.0 TNF WORK: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The tripartite consultations within the ambit of the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF) have registered some achievements over time with hitches and glitches here and there. For instance, in October 1999, a tripartite technical committee was tasked to produce a draft Declaration of Intent towards a Social Contract but because of the February 2000 Constitutional Referendum and the June 2000 Parliamentary Elections, a TNF meeting could not be convened during the said period. However, by October, 2000, the technical team was mandated to fine-tune the Draft Declaration of Intent towards a Social Contract and by January 2001, the social partners signed the Draft Declaration of Intent Towards a Social Contract. The Declaration provided a general framework for negotiation and conclusion of specific protocols covering specific socio-economic issues under the realm of a social contract. Issues for discussion included prices and incomes, economic stabilisation, anti-corruption, health and safety at work, empowerment, skills development, environmental management, public relations/confidence building, urban transport, productivity enhancement, fuel pricing, privatisation, budget performance, national health insurance scheme and so forth. However, the TNF also recognised that there was need to address the totality of the macro-economic problems which included the country risk factor. To achieve this end, a small team was tasked to crystallise the social partners perceptions on what country risk meant and how that can be overcome in order for the country to improve its image. By November, 2001 a Draft Kadoma Declaration was formulated ready for consideration and signing by the social partners. This never happened as this was in the run-up to the 2002 presidential elections when social dialogue took a back seat.

As a product also of TNF deliberations, on 20 February 2003 the Zimbabwe National Productivity Centre was launched at the Scientific Industrial and Research and Development Centre (SIRDC) which is expected to spearhead productivity enhancement and the proliferation of best practice in the Zimbabwe economy. The Centre has a Tripartite Advisory Council which is composed of government, business and labour. Regarding the national health insurance scheme, which is also on the TNF agenda,

preparatory work was undertaken in terms of studies but the issue is still in abeyance within the ambit of the TNF.

In April 2003, the government announced new fuel price increases in line with its obligations in NERP to 'address fuel problems ...by February, 2003'. Following this announcement, labour pulled out of the TNF as mentioned earlier demanding government rescind its decision. Government did not do so leading labour to a call for mass stayaways from 23 to 25 April, 2003 (*Daily News*, 29 April 2003, p. 36; *The Herald* 29 April 2003, p.9). This the government largely condemned as political (*The Sunday Mail*, 11 May 2003, p. 4; *The Daily News*, 10 May 2003, p.5). A subsequent meeting with a bipartite character was held between the government and business on new minimum wages, which was high on the TNF agenda for discussion within the purview of the TNF's sub-committee on minimum wages. The relationship between social partners shows traces of vulnerability and also reflects possible opportunism and hypocrisy as they tango when it is convenient to do so, and bolt out of the relationship also when expedient to do so but at the expense of the economy.

Zimbabwe has been facing multiple crises: job crisis, currency instability, rising inflation, fuel shortages, widespread labour unrest, increasing poverty against a backdrop of a shrinking economy. Given these problems, there have been expressions by many actors and social commentators that the country's current problems can be resolved through a process of social dialogue. The question is: Can social dialogue solve the current teething problems the country is facing? Can social dialogue work when social partners are polarized along political lines? According to Sambureni (2001: 96),

The effect of politics in labour comes into play given that the main political opposition in Zimbabwe, that is the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) is labour backed. Naturally, it aspires to form a government and hence cannot go for any joint approach with the sitting government to resolve economic problems.

Furthermore, what are the expectations of the key stakeholders in terms of a workable social contract? How best can it be implemented? Can government afford to go it alone?

Or can it go along with business? Alternatively, can it go with the support of multi-lateral agencies? What effect does a social contract have on the power of the executive, parliament and cabinet? What is the TNF? What legal basis does it have? Are the problems beyond a social contract? If social contracts result in compromises, can the current problems be solved by compromises and half solutions? Does Zimbabwe need partial solutions or a comprehensive package to solve its problems? Do the problems involve other stakeholders and not just business, labour and government? Do these parties represent everyone in society at large? The Consumer Council of Zimbabwe is seeking involvement in the TNF, but would that be tripartism in the strictest sense of the word? Does civic society have a role to play too? Maybe in the NECF, which the ZCTU is not party to? What is the way forward? By laying the facts bare, this research attempts to address some, but not all, of the questions and map out a way forward.

On reflection, indeed, many writers on the subject have tended to concentrate on the success stories of social dialogue where it is institutionalised such as Barbados, South Africa, Phillipines, Kenya and Zambia (ILOb, n.d) and little has been written about the status of failed social dialogue as this chapter attempts to do. Whereas a lot is known about the fruits of social dialogue, very little is known about factors militating against it. This opens a yawning gap in the literature especially as it concerns developing countries such as Zimbabwe faced with a multiplicity of conundrums. These arise from a past colonial history, a very fresh history of the liberation struggle, flashbacks of neo-colonialism, shock therapies of neo-liberalism (structural adjustment programmes of 1990s), and the resurgence of imperialism, all viewed against a backdrop of developing institutions of governance trying to find their feet, a culture of negotiation and compromise still in its infancy if not non-existent, and the quest for self-determination and economic independence within the context of a siege economy.

Social dialogue was taking place when land reform was taking off. It was followed by the 2002 general elections. Thus, the land reform and the 2002 election results were being discussed under conditions of disagreement and contestation both locally, regionally and internationally. The government of Zimbabwe is a legitimate government with a huge

constituency and therefore huge space. It is neither a failed state nor a falling state with a wide mass support and whose arms of government have embraced the slogan ‘Zimbabwe will never be a colony again’, as enunciated by the Minister of Information and Publicity in the Presidents’s Office, Professor Jonathan Moyo²¹. With this as background, it may be possible to have some insight into the power game as it plays itself out within the territorial boundaries of Zimbabwe.

This chapter proceeds as follows. In section 3, I describe the research objectives, significance of the study and methodology. Section 4 presents the results. Section 5 covers the discussion and Section 6 the concluding remarks.

3.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the research were:

- To examine the social dialogue process in Zimbabwe since inception in 1998 to 2003²²;
- To understand the modalities of how social dialogue is taking place in Zimbabwe; and
- To suggest some recommendations on how a social dialogue can be improved in Zimbabwe and to highlight the necessary conditions for its sustenance to achieve macro-economic stability.

This chapter aims to adequately unravel the multi-faceted dimensions of the social dialogue process beyond theory of social contracts with special reference to the case of Zimbabwe. It aims to enrich our own understanding of the social dialogue process on a politically charged social scale. It also aims to provide lessons for Zimbabwean and other

²¹ During the March 2005 Parliamentary Elections, Professor Jonathan Moyo contested the elections and won the Tsholotsho parliamentary seat after being ousted from the ruling Party, the Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front) or (ZANU) PF – for contesting as an independent.

²² The year 1998 marks the time when social partners began talking, in earnest, about a Social Contract. May 2003 is when this research was undertaken.

countries' social partners of government, trade unions, business and society at large on how to manage the social dialogue processes. There is no previous research, undertaken in the remit of social dialogue in Zimbabwe, and moreover the results have immediate practical utility in terms of unravelling the prospects and constraints to social dialogue in Zimbabwe.

For purposes of this research, the survey approach was chosen which made use of a semi-structured questionnaire with open-ended questions. Because of this, the research design was qualitative in nature. The study population targeted 30 key informants, ten drawn from organised business, ten from organised labour and ten drawn from government at various levels, namely, political/policy (presidents of associations and unions including cabinet ministers, secretary generals of associations and unions including permanent secretaries of ministries) and technical (operatives, labour practitioners, and economists including government officials). The individuals targeted were participants in the TNF, the 'insiders' with most expertise in how social dialogue was being conducted in Zimbabwe. After identification, these individuals were then asked to participate in this survey of opinions. As such, the people interviewed from the various camps ranged from economists to labour officers. By virtue of the fact that the political level largely consists of very busy people and given the sensitivity of the issues, for the sake of this survey and progress, none of the questionnaires were administered at the political level. While several attempts were made to get an audience at the political level, the researcher had to settle for technocrats who had the time to share their experiences and were keen about the results of the study as it was of immediate and practical significance to them. The study was the first of its kind on social dialogue in Zimbabwe. The people at the political level did not refuse to be interviewed, but the interviews never materialised during the month of the survey as the researcher was referred to the technocrats to assist due to time constraints.

The remaining ten (10) questionnaires were dedicated to women's groups, the youth, academia and specialised institutions such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The breakdown of the key informants is given in the Table 2. Slightly more than

two-thirds of the key informants were drawn from the social partners of organised labour (21 per cent), organised business (25 per cent) and government (21 per cent). NGOs accounted for 11 per cent of the interviewees while the academia accounted for 7 per cent. About 68 per cent of the respondents were male while females accounted for the remaining 32 per cent.

Table 2: Respondents by constituency

	<i>No</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Academia	2	7
Business	7	25
Government	6	21
Labour	6	21
NGO	3	11
Parastatal	2	7
Youth	2	7
Female	9	32
Male	19	68

The interviews had a semi-structured format covering the following broad areas:

- preconditions of social dialogue in Zimbabwe;
- social dialogue and stakeholdership;
- SWOT analysis of TNF;
- retaliatory actions within social dialogue; and
- sprucing up the social dialogue discourse.

One trained enumerator and the researcher administered most of the questionnaires where queries from informants were immediately entertained and clarified. A few questionnaires were deposited at the place of work of the respondents for self-administration. In addition, two focus group discussions with 6-8 participants were conducted. As for analysis, the qualitative information was broken down into themes. Furthermore, the data were broken down into individual data bits as units of analysis ranging from a few words to several paragraphs, with each bit carrying one idea or a piece of information. The data bits were assigned to specific thematic categories. After

examining the content of individual bits, distinctive concepts were assigned to each category. The final broad categories were:

- institutional framework; and
- legal framework.

Twenty eight (28) questionnaires were received in May 2003. All the returned questionnaires formed the basis of this analysis. Out of the target of 40 questionnaires, 28 were successfully completed/interviewed. This yielded a response rate of 70 per cent. The rest were treated as non-responses. This implies that a sizeable majority from the targeted population was canvassed during the survey and indicates the level of confidence with which one can interpret the data and arrive at conclusions.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

4.1.1 Scope, pre-requisites and constraints for dialogue in Zimbabwe

Sarfati (n.d) argues that the following are the pre-requisites for social dialogue: representative social partners and the proper institutional framework; commitment to dialogue and to achieve results; shared knowledge of relevant information; authority and ability to negotiate and to enforce decisions as well as a dynamic role for the State.

Respondents were asked whether there was place for dialogue in Zimbabwe and why they think so. The expectation was to gauge the respondents' level of awareness of social dialogue processes and their opinion on whether they still have faith in social dialogue in solving Zimbabwe's current problems against a backdrop of dialogue going in circles. A majority (86 per cent) believed that there is place for dialogue in Zimbabwe while only 14 per cent believed otherwise. These results are shown in Table 3 below. The oft-quoted reasons for the need for dialogue in Zimbabwe were cited by the respondents as the prevailing socio- economic problems – 'the crisis' –the need to develop the economy and that the issues lend themselves to dialogue for which the TNF provides the platform.

According to the survey, slightly over half of the respondent believed the TNF represents all the key stakeholders largely because these bodies are constituency-based (from where they derive their mandate) and are organised to the extent that they believed that the other constituencies can be accommodated within the broad aegis of business, labour and government with room for co-option when necessary. About 43 per cent of the respondents felt that the TNF is not representative of all key stakeholders. It is consumers and women who felt they should have a stake on the TNF. Therefore, consumers, women, and the informal sector felt excluded from the TNF.

Table 3: Respondents views on modalities of social dialogue in Zimbabwe

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not specified</i>
Room for dialogue in Zimbabwe	24 (86%)	4 (14%)	-
Representation of key stakeholders on TNF	15 (54%)	12 (43%)	1 (4%)
Use of protocols	21 (75%)	6 (21%)	1 (4%)
Legal basis for TNF	20 (71%)	7 (25%)	1 (4%)

Respondents were asked their views in connection with whether TNF business should be conducted via protocols in order to understand whether the country needs a package deal the size of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP, 1991-1995) or Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST 1996-2000) or it can elect to go the protocol route which addresses issue by issue at a specific point in time. The respondents' views on the use of protocols are also shown in Table 3. Three quarters of the respondents were of the opinion that TNF business should be conducted via protocols largely because the respondents believed that they provide an obligatory framework, are focused and deal with one issue at a time.

The key informants were asked about their views concerning whether the TNF should be transformed into a legal body or not. According to the survey data, about 71 per cent of the respondents feel that the TNF should be a legally constituted body, while 25 per cent felt it should not be a legal body. The remaining four per cent were non-committal.

Most of the key informants in this survey were of the opinion that legalising the TNF would facilitate the enforcement of decisions arrived at the TNF, thus making those

decisions binding and giving force to decision-making. Of the few responses to the question as to why the TNF should not be legislated, the interviewees cited the following: that it becomes rigid, bureaucratic and may conflict with other legal bodies thereby bringing about unnecessary delays to negotiations.

A question was posed to the interviewees regarding their perceptions on pitfalls/impediments to social dialogue in Zimbabwe. According to the interviewees, impediments to social dialogue in Zimbabwe include politics/polarisation, external influence, mistrust and the lack of a code of conduct. This seems to suggest that these negative influences have the potential to scuttle social dialogue in Zimbabwe.

Key informants' views were solicited with respect to the prerequisites or preconditions for social dialogue in general. There was consensus among the interviewees that 'trust' is a key pre-requisite for social dialogue as it provides a vehicle through which voice emerges. 'Commitment' and 'good faith' were also mentioned as important in social dialogue. Indeed, these qualities are at the heart and bedrock of social dialogue. Understanding of these requirements for social dialogue is important insofar as it will enable social partners to correct the prevailing position and start from their constituencies to ensure that these prerequisites exist for the common good. The success or failure of the process is predicated on the amounts in which these prerequisites are availed by the social partners in a spirit of give and take. While acknowledging that 'trust' is a necessary pre-requisite for social dialogue, interviewees were of the opinion that it did not exist among social partners in Zimbabwe.

4.1.2 Profile of key stakeholders to the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF)

Table 8 below shows organisations that the respondents felt should be parties to the TNF process and the reasons behind that acknowledgement. The involvement of government, labour and business was deemed appropriate and apt by the interviewees. The other groups which can be co-opted to induce buy-in are also shown in Table 4, including the potential roles they can play in line with the suggestions of the respondents.

Table 4: Respondents' views on the potential roles of parties

Institution	Reason for Involvement/Role
Government	For the provision of the legal/policy framework For coordination and regulation As convener of meetings and mediator As implementer of decisions For policy and decision making Its participation is in line with ILO requirements
Trade Unions	To advance the interests/rights of the workers Their participation is in line with ILO requirements Are implementers of decisions
Organised Business	To represent business interests To produce goods & create jobs As implementer of decisions Its participation is in line with ILO requirements
Civic Groups	For development assistance They play a support role Act as independent observers
Institutes/Universities	To provide new ideas and opinions Useful for technical backstopping As an observer For intellectual support
Youth Groups/Student Unions	To represent the youth As an observer
Women's Groups	To represent women To address gender issues Act as observers
Political Parties	As implementers of decisions For political support
Consumer Groups	To represent the consumer To ensure consumer protection As observers
Professional Associations	To provide professional expertise and advice
Other, Informal sector	To contribute to job/wealth creation

According to the respondents, it is government that should play a multiplicity of roles such as providing the legal and policy framework, coordination/regulation, convener of meetings, mediator as well as being an implementer. The respondents identified the other

social partners as ‘implementers’ clearly suggesting that all have a part to play especially with regard to implementation of agreed positions on the ground.

Key informants were asked a question in connection with what they consider to be TNF successes and TNF setbacks. The successes include: bringing fuel prices down at some point, coming up with the declaration of intent towards a social contract; the pricing and incomes protocol; and the National Economic Revival Programme (NERP); tax reform in 1999; exchange rate adjustment; a reduction in tension and the establishment of the Zimbabwe National Productivity Centre. These achievements reflect the potential that the TNF has in tackling the problems at both the macro–micro levels.

Among the setbacks, interviewees recalled the following, *inter alia*, that the TNF has no teeth, it is prone to arm-twisting; it is impaired by external influence; the existence of the black/parallel market in goods and services; the Chair taking unilateral action on fuel; the feedback is slow from the process; government retains sweeping powers as well as the existence of widespread politicking. For success to be registered in terms of reining in on the fundamentals, the TNF must seriously consider addressing these setbacks for dialogue to sustain.

The TNF posted some successes against a backdrop of multiple setbacks. It can be posited that crises can be averted so long as the environment for discourse is permitting.

4.1.3 Sprucing up the Tripartite Negotiating Forum

A question was posed on how respondents felt the TNF can be improved and narrate their expectations from it. On how it can be enhanced, respondents offered the following suggestions: to give it authority/legal status, to broaden its representation, have a full time secretariat dedicated to the TNF, conduct an extensive Information, Education Campaign (IEC), conduct joint reporting sessions and rotate its chairmanship.

On their expectations, they noted the following: the attainment of better industrial relations, stable economy, stable prices, joint ownership of outcomes, peace and economic development and democracy and the rule of law among other things.

4.1.4 Options available besides the TNF route

According to the survey, the following were suggested as options to follow besides the TNF route in solving the current socio-economic problems afflicting the country: efficient government economic management; government going it alone; involving international community; negotiating at political level; and that the social dialogue route is the 'only route' (Table 5).

Table 5: Options available besides the TNF/social dialogue route

<p>OPTIONS</p>	<p>Involve all stakeholders Social dialogue Efficient Government economic management Government must govern since TNF route is long Government attitude to labour must change Problems can be solved by Government through fiscal and monetary policies Government can go it alone There is need to involve the international community Negotiate at political level None None, TNF is immediate while others are long-term Only route Political parties must dialogue Use social movements</p>
<p>If dialogue is to be pursued, why?</p>	<p>It is an acceptable option Be proactive, not crisis-driven Dialogue creates a platform to solve problems such as employee grievances that have to be solved There is capacity for negotiation Issues at stake are important for country's development There is no choice because of political and economic crisis It offers ray of hope/route out of quagmire Dialogue is starting point to solve problems Dialogue allows for not postponing problems</p>
<p>Why dialogue should be abandoned</p>	<p>It is not necessary because parties are not committed It is a waste of time</p>

On why dialogue should be pursued, the respondents were of the view that: it is an acceptable option, dialogue solves problems, employees have grievances that need to be solved, there is capacity for negotiation, it is the last route and last option as the issues are important for country's development. The few responses on why it should be abandoned indicate that it should be so because: it is not necessary because parties are not committed and therefore it is a waste of time. (These views are tabulated in Table 5 above).

There is credence in suggesting that prudent economic management by government would obviate the need for dialogue to resolve the country's crisis. However, for dialogue to be pursued, the parameters for that dialogue should be pre-defined. By the same token, the same idea brings credence to the notion by some respondents that the social dialogue route is the 'only route' to resolve Zimbabwe's problems because of the crisis. Overall, the dialogue spirit permeating the social partners as opposed to confrontation should be the golden opportunity for the social partners to exploit.

4.2 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

4.2.1 Agenda for the Tripartite Negotiating Forum

In posing this question about what should constitute the TNF agenda, the expectation here was to get from the respondents what they consider to be the 'burning issues' begging for solutions. According to the respondents, the TNF agenda should include social, economic, political, legal, technological, media and country risk factors suggesting an open agenda. Precisely, the agenda should concentrate on 'bread and butter' issues. However, noteworthy, were a few interviewees who felt that the agenda should exclude political issues.

4.2.2 Relationship between the TNF, Parliament, Cabinet and the Public

Questions were posed regarding how the TNF should relate to the parliament, cabinet and the public particularly because variations on these relationships can be discerned in

different countries of the world, hence, it was found pertinent to probe the key informants' views on the matter. According to the key informants, the relationship that should exist between the TNF and parliament is one of feed forward and feed back. Accordingly, parliament should play a role of adviser/resource to the TNF with debate of TNF issues transmitted to parliament and also TNF issues coming from parliament.

With respect to cabinet, interviewees were of the view that cabinet should play multiple roles with respect to TNF processes. It should act as adviser to the TNF, ratify decisions arrived at the TNF and in turn the TNF should be the think-tank for cabinet. According to the survey, interviewees were of the opinion that consultations with constituencies (the public) are important. More importantly, this inter-change should take place through constant communication via a TNF public relation desk. In searching for a method/instrument to bring into effect TNF decisions, respondents were asked how agreements reached at TNF could be enforced/implemented. The key informants were of the view that TNF decisions can be enforced via legislation.

4.2.3 Retaliatory actions and the TNF/social dialogue process

Views of the key informants were solicited on what they believed boycotts, stayaways, lockouts, artificial shortages, re-branding and re-packaging achieve in social dialogue processes. Artificial shortages are a way that firms employ to starve the market of product to force a review of prices. Re-branding is giving a new name to a product which is not on the controlled prices list to circumvent price controls, for example, giving a washing powder, a completely new name but the ingredients remaining the same. This is a ploy used by business to hold both government and labour to economic ransom. Since it is a power game, labour can withdraw its labour and government can impose legislation. We see these being played out often in Zimbabwe.

The views of the respondents on the usefulness of these ploys and instruments are discussed below. Some respondents expressed the view that boycotts assist in pushing positions and are a mode to register displeasure. Depictions were also made of boycotts

as being detrimental and negative to social dialogue. Therefore strikes/boycotts should be avoided if benefits to the parties are minimal and the costs and injury to the public are great. Almost similar sentiments were expressed regarding stayaways. Legislation was described, *inter alia*, as assisting in pushing positions, promoting binding outcomes, strengthening dialogue and creating a conducive environment. On the downside it was described as being tantamount to bullying and undermining negotiations. Legislation from TNF be 'negotiated' to strengthen dialogue and ensure legitimacy of decisions. Lockouts were described as effective and they make the process urgent on the upside, while on the downside, they were described as undermining dialogue and detrimental to social dialogue. Artificial shortages and re-branding were largely painted with the same brush. On the up, they were cited as an instrument for forcing parties to be serious and as a (natural) response to legislation. On the downside, they were viewed as causing splits and collapse of the process, raising questions on their usefulness and largely reflecting negotiation in bad faith.

The TNF's work can richly be enhanced in the following ways by broadening participation through tripartite plus consultations and/or separate stakeholder meetings, conscientising the public, by having a full time TNF secretariat, embarking on a full-fledged IEC strategy and conducting joint reporting sessions and rotating the chairmanship. It can disseminate some of its information through TV, radio and print media including face-to-face meetings with stakeholders in a proactive fashion as well as extensively making use of own structures of social partners such as labour/business forums and cabinet/constituencies. All these should be done to bring about better industrial relations, a stable economy, stable prices, joint ownership of outcomes and peace and economic development within a framework of democracy and the rule of law among other things.

Specific recommendations are given for government, business and labour to consider in pursuit of social dialogue.

- Concerning government, for dialogue to continue, it should desist from unilateral action, even if it is only perceived to be such. Organised labour which is largely concentrated in the cities, should not have fears of losing their militancy by agreeing to work with the other social partners. Labour should be encouraged to come to the negotiating table for the common good. Their policy of ‘loud diplomacy’ represented by calls for stayaways and foreign intervention militate against the nurturing of home grown solutions to current problems. Business should also be encouraged to desist from re-branding and profiteering as this undermines negotiation and leaves government with no option but to resort to the route of ‘more legislation’. It is apt at this juncture to recommend the development of a code of conduct to govern relationships between parties and for compliance stipulating censure/sanctions for non-compliance and layout mechanisms for dispute settlement and conflict resolution either via arbitration or mediation, the courts or Parliament and spelling out the responsible arms.
- All policy makers should endeavour to engender good faith. They should be aware that where there is lack of good faith, cooperation is unattainable and unfeasible. Cooperation can be sustained through face-to-face interaction, participation and involvement given the highly polarized state of affairs. Chamberlain and Kuhn (1965: 439) points out that, ‘competition between groups with divergent interests, whether between two companies or between union and management, has the advantage of avoiding a collusion at public expense. Each keeps the other ‘on its toes’ as it were. But carried to excess, competition can break down a system of social order...’ Therefore, policy makers need to distinguish between issues of divergent and common interest and build mutual trust and loyalty for dialogue to be sustained, that is, the need to put the common good over sectoral interests.
- There may be need to appoint a separate commission to oversee the implementation of TNF decisions which must be *tripartite/tripartite plus* in nature. Such functions could be hived off to the NECF. However, since labour is not party to NECF work, it may be prudent to appoint a new one. There is credence in that because at inception, the TNF was conceived as a specialised sub-committee of the NECF. Whereas, the NECF looks largely at national issues, the TNF is sectoral. The NECF which is

funded and has a dedicated permanent secretariat could ideally have played the monitoring role/think tank of the TNF through its researches. It has the human resources capacity and necessary funding and has chapters in major cities of the country.

Thus, that partners should negotiate is beyond doubt. However, the one-size-fit-all paradigm does not work. Given the political specificities of Zimbabwe, the servants of administration, of law and order have all rallied on the side of the government paralysing civic groups and crowding them out for democratic and political space.

For workers and unions there may be need find alternatives steeped in the decent work and decent pay agenda. The bottom up approach has failed insofar as there is very little of a bottom to talk about. The choice for the unions is either to seek confrontation or dialogue. With increased contestation for donor funding, civic groups have profited from the magnanimity of international donors, who have shown a growing appetite to appropriate the project in pursuit of their own agendas including those well bankrolled NGOs. This group represents either the parasitic left or right depending on the activist's persuasion. Because of their poverty, trade unions and NGOs may tend to drive the donor agenda in order to access resources, thus may lead to failure to execute their mandates and respond to the growing needs of their constituencies. Terje as cited in Gaidzwana (2001) notes that the NGOs in Norway have worked with state rather than against it and increasing its responsibility rather supplanting it with NGOs. Gaidzanwa (2001) notes that since many NGOs are specific in their foci, the state remains the only entity that can take a broader and inclusive perspective in many countries of Southern Africa.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Zimbabwe does provide a case study of interest in the epistemology of social dialogue given its socio-economic and political specificities. Within the context of the social dialogue project, despite all its shortcomings, social dialogue still offers us the following:

Firstly, a tool through which social partners can engage each other. Secondly, it provides some space for hope even to the victims (general public) of the apparent political stalemate. Thirdly, although social dialogue, in a sense, is probably the only artefact we have for articulating the rights of the workers and non-workers, the formal and informal sectors, the students and the aged – as they all stand to benefit from the results of the whole social dialogue enterprise – it needs to be nurtured, institutionalised and internalised by all parties concerned because it has the power to influence policy at the highest level. Thus, to the extent that social dialogue cannot be imposed by law, it could only be achieved as result of the voluntary and persistent efforts of [all] parties.

There is the need and scope to institutionalise the mechanisms of conflict resolution within the civic movement, between government and business, between government and labour, between government and civil society, within all parties themselves – intra party, intra institution, inter-party and so forth. There is a general dearth of dialogue and interchange of ideas among citizens thereby creating a dialogue problematic. It is here that the ILO has a big role to play in terms of backstopping and technical advice without appropriating the project and interfering in the processes. The ILO must keep the debate alive for elaboration of the nature, content, scope and issues pertaining to the implementation of social dialogue in Zimbabwe. This provides ample ground to learn new nuances and scales pertaining to social dialogue.

The bottom line is, if social dialogue is not sustained, the crisis facing the country will deepen further to the detriment of all the social partners and the generality of the population. There is advantage in conferring instead of continuing with attritional socio-economic wrestling and a prolonged and doubtful contest characterised by continuities and discontinuities of dialogue. This, indeed, is a process of continual learning, however taking place against a backdrop of distinct and conflicting ideological backgrounds, which appear diametrically opposed in principle. The basic problem of harmonising the interests, rights, duties of labour, business, government and the general public have permeated generations hence are not new but coming in a different setting and different degree of urgency. Chamberlain and Kuhn (1965) observe that collective bargaining, is

distinguishable by 'its systemisation, its continuity, and its acceptance'. So should be social dialogue in the interest of progress in Zimbabwe.

Shall we lose faith in social dialogue? While the answer is NO, by institutionalising social dialogue, some have arrived at the conclusion that social dialogue is 'over-empowering' in that it cripples government to function. Thus, in the final analysis parties must behave like good citizens, lest government resorts to wage and price controls, including strike controls and further regulation. For government must govern with the mandate of the people. It has a big role to play in industrial relations either by its action or apparent inaction. Dialogue must be pursued for practical reasons and this is consistent with ILO Convention 144, Tripartite Consultations (1976) recommendation No. 152 that the Government of Zimbabwe ratified as far back as 1989. Thus, all TNF deadlocks should be referred to parliament for dialogue to be sustained and to resolve the current stalemate. Refuting Thomas Hobbes' words that human life is 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short,' that should not be the case with the generality of Zimbabweans. People should be the centre of gravity for TNF processes as they expect prosperity from the TNF process including the betterment of people's living standards, job creation, poverty alleviation as well as the preservation of national sovereignty. Quoting Ricardo Hausman (in Richard Peet 2003:216), 'I fully participated in the hope so I'm fully a participant in the disappointment.' I, therefore, fully share the same sentiment.

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CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL PROTECTION AND TARGETING IN ZIMBABWE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at social safety-nets and targeting in Zimbabwe. It provides a brief historical perspective and critique of their implementation based on evaluations undertaken by Kaseke et al. (1997), Sithole et al. (1999) and Mbetu et al. (1999) and commissioned by the Government of Zimbabwe. It also provides a critique of their current status.

1.1. SOCIAL SAFETY-NETS AND TARGETING IN ZIMBABWE

Everyone seems to know what poverty is all about, from the politician, the student, the poor, the chronic poor, the transitory poor, the rich, the academics and the church. But when it comes to its definition and measurement, cracks begin to emerge. According to MacPherson and Silburn (1998:1) poverty is ‘a basic lack of the means of survival, the poor are those who, even in normal circumstances, are unable to feed and clothe themselves properly and risk death as a consequence.’ Furthermore, MacPherson and Silburn (1998:17) argue that

the attempt to construct an absolute and presumably universal definition of poverty is fundamentally flawed, both in theory and practice...Our concept of poverty determines our definition and our definition determines our measures. What we choose to measure and how, gives us the problem we choose to confront and thus shapes our policy [and tools].

By extension, they are also saying that these academic questions of definition and measurement have consequences for both policy and practice. It is at the level of practice that conundrums and contradictions become glaringly evident as shall be seen in the case of Zimbabwe in the operation of social safety-nets. MacPherson and Silburn (1998:17) conclude with the sobering note: ‘unless and until the poverty problem is adequately conceptualized, defined and measured, countless millions will continue to suffer’.

Related to the issue of counting the poor is the issue of how to reach the poor when providing poverty relief. Social safety-nets attempt to address the issue of reaching them with assistance whether for moral, socio-political or humanitarian reasons. They are normally government-mandated interventions to alleviate the plight of an identified group of persons. The interventions are not limited solely to government activities, but the scope of social safety-nets can be expanded to include the activities of non-governmental organisations, civil society, private firms as well as individuals.

1.2 OVERVIEW AND AIMS OF SOCIAL SAFETY-NETS

Shepherd et al. (2004:2) define social protection as a set of policies that governments can pursue in order to protect the poor and enable them to participate more productively in economic activity with the aim of reducing risk and vulnerability. They further note that a social-protection approach is premised on achieving a degree of agreement, across society, that citizens are entitled to certain minimum standards of welfare by virtue of their citizenship. The concept of social protection is broader than the concept of social safety-nets. Social safety-nets have connotations of being ad hoc, short term and relief-related whereas social protection encompasses public assistance, social insurance, social security, humanitarian relief, pension, microfinance and micro-insurance and so on. Thus social-protection includes social safety nets and what Shepherd et al. (2004:8) describe as *ex ante* prevention and mitigation measures.

The debates on the delivery of social protection also concern what Smith (2001:13) points out as to ‘whether safety nets should be designed primarily to address shocks (e.g drought years) or to raise incomes to relieve chronic poverty more generally’. In addition, the debate continues in the arena of targeting. Cornia and Stewart (1993), as cited in Kaseke et al. (1997), note two types of errors in targeting that can be committed: ‘the error of the omission of the poor from the scheme and the error of the inclusion of the non-poor’. Decisions about who benefits and who does not are political. Equally political are such decisions as to how many shall benefit? Who are the beneficiaries? Only vulnerable groups such as orphans, the disabled, and the elderly? Or people falling below

a given minimally accepted standard of living? Child-headed households or just children? Families or individuals?

There are questions that relate to who disburses the assistance? In other words, who implements and co-ordinates? Government? Non-governmental organisations? Civil society? Individuals? Or the private sector?

The methods of intervention include a range of options each with both advantages and disadvantages, such as Public works? Cash transfers? Voucher/coupon transfer? Food transfer? Food-for-work? Cash-for-work? Inputs (seed/fertiliser)-for-work? Feeding scheme? In what combinations? All of these decisions also fall into the political realm.

The issue of co-ordination of the interventions is also critical to the success of the programmes. Smith (2001:22) maintains that the proliferation in Malawi of donors each proposing a different design and different incentives, and each proposing different methodologies and modalities with respect to targeting, contracting and community participation, over-stretches the limited administrative capacity. This over-stretching dilutes impact and confuses signals and incentives resulting in unco-ordinated targeting in which programmes may cover some target households (or areas, or groups of beneficiaries) several times while others are not reached at all (Smith, 2001:22).

The other issues are of a technical nature such as the timing of the intervention. Is it short-term or long term? Time-bound? Continuous? When should it stop and how should it stop? How should targeting be conducted?

The issues at the political and technical levels are inter-linked. For instance capacity has to be created depending on the scale of the operations and duration thereof. Additional elaboration of the debates are provided in Tables 6 and 7 in Appendix 1 but before critically examining the poverty interventions in Zimbabwe, a brief historical perspective of social safety nets in Zimbabwe is provided.

2.0 A BRIEF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL SAFETY NETS

Since the late '80s and early '90s social safety-nets have been used in Zimbabwe for purposes of ameliorating the negative effects of droughts and floods in the form of drought relief or humanitarian assistance. In the 1990s households were facing a variety of income shocks of which dominant idiosyncratic shocks²³ included unemployment, retrenchment, death in families and long illness and covariant shocks included price increases/inflation, devaluation, taxes and drought (Mutangadura and Makaudze, 2000). How a household managed risk depended on the household's socio-economic setting (internal factors peculiar to the household, such as asset base, the household's access to resources, household size and composition); availability and accessibility of formal and informal social-support mechanisms and availability and accessibility of environmental or natural resource assets, as well as policy and institutional setting (Mutangadura and Makaudze, 2000). In terms of coping, the dominant responses were use of savings, sale of assets, reduced consumption, switching to cheaper substitutes, child labour, subletting, borrowing from informal sources, remittances from family members and sale of wild produce in order to buy food, pay school fees and cost of health care, buy farm inputs and meet funeral costs (Mutangadura and Makaudze, 2000).

More recently the Government of Zimbabwe has been operating a number of social safety nets to cushion needy members of society, through the Ministry of Public Service and Social Welfare in the wake of deepening poverty arising from the challenges the country has been facing since the 1990s.

In an evaluation report for the period 1990 – 1996, Kaseke et al. (1997:1) note that the Government of Zimbabwe administers two types of social safety nets: those provided in situations of emergency or crisis such as the *Child Supplementary Feeding Programme (CSFP)*, *Free Food Distribution (FFD)* and the *Grain Loan Scheme (GLS)*; as well as those social safety nets provided under normal conditions such as the *Public Assistance Programme* and the *Social Development Fund (SDF)*. Assistance to needy members is

²³ Idiosyncratic shocks affect individuals or individual households, while covariant affect a number of households or communities.

conceived as temporary, based on the residual concept of social welfare which holds that welfare should be provided if individuals are unable to secure assistance from their families and the market economy to meet basic needs (Kaseke et al. 1997:1).

Governments are expected to provide some level of social protection and welfare to their citizens on the basis of their constitution and social contracts and this the Government of Zimbabwe has clearly attempted to do.

2.1 THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME – CASH TRANSFERS

The Public Assistance Programme is intended to assist destitute and indigent persons sixty years of age and over; or those handicapped physically or mentally; or any person suffering continuous ill-health. The Public Assistance Programme lacked robustness in its delivery system and therefore faltered. In addition the criteria for inclusion were not simple. As Kaseke et al. (1997) note it was failing to reach all the needy because of:

- inaccessibility of the Social Welfare Offices which were not located within reach of the communities especially in the rural areas;
- there was very little awareness of the programme;
- paucity of information in local languages (Mbetu et al. 1999); and
- the selectivity of the programme in terms of coverage that led to many needy people being unable to benefit (Kaseke et al. 1997; Sithole et al. 1999).

The benefits given to beneficiaries were a pittance with no bearing on the cost of living: they stigmatised beneficiaries and condemned them to a life of poverty (Kaseke et al. 1997:52; Sithole et al. 1999:29). Slater et al. (2008) note that targeting transfers is both a political and technical process whose criteria for inclusion must be simple and transparent, with robust delivery systems and with information being readily accessible.

Cash payments have many advantages since beneficiaries can do many things with cash. A cash transfer provides choice. However, there is anecdotal evidence suggesting that beneficiaries have used cash in some instance for the purchase of beer and other unproductive uses. Current interventions have been rendered worthless due to

hyperinflation. In many respects, cash disempowers beneficiaries by promoting laziness and a dependency syndrome. Hence Slater et al. (2006:1) suggests that when using cash transfers, questions about the feasibility, appropriateness, effectiveness and impact need to be addressed. This applies to all social safety nets which must be subjected to some measure of interrogation that includes their efficiency, dependency-reduction, provision of an exit mechanism, sustainability, gender-sensitivity, and incorruptibility.

2.2 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

This fund was created in 1991 in light of the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programme by the Government of Zimbabwe to provide welfare support during the transition period. The fund provided school and health fees to those households whose income was Z\$400 and below, while food money was given to urban households whose incomes were Z\$200 and below (Kaseke et al. 1997:8). At inception, the establishment of a social development fund alongside an existing Department of Social Welfare created problems of co-ordination emanating from the non-delineation of responsibility between the two entities. However, with the passage of time the functions of each unit were delineated. The food money was abandoned as the administrative costs to both the government and the beneficiaries outweighed the benefits resulting in a low take-up rate (Kaseke et al. 1997:9).

Kaseke et al. (1997:9) takes the view that the programme could not be sustained because ‘the targeting system based on household income was inappropriate as it ignored the size of the family [such that] some applicants who were needy were denied assistance’. Furthermore, many intended beneficiaries were not accessing the scheme because they were not aware of its existence (Kaseke et al. 1997:9). Politicians unashamedly referred ineligible applicants to obtain assistance on the grounds that they could not be denied access to Government money (Sithole et al. 1999:6). The health fee scheme was rendered ineffective by a shortage of drugs and lack of clarity on policy and procedure (Kaseke et al. 1997:10).

2.3 FREE FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Free food distribution was introduced in 1995 to cushion vulnerable groups from drought-induced food shortages (Kaseke et al. 1997:10). Free food was given to the elderly, the disabled and the chronically ill. For able-bodied people, the government introduced the *Public Works Programme* which required beneficiaries to work on public works designed to improve community infrastructure in return for money which beneficiaries could then use to buy food (Kaseke et al. 1997:10). The Public Works programme incurred opportunity costs for participants related to their inability to engage in productive activities on their own farms while earning only meagre incomes in Public Works programmes. Peer-pressure also commonly pushes people to participate even though it is not in their best interest. The infrastructure created was generally cosmetic except for road rehabilitation activities and gully reclamation. This programme was redesigned to become the *Food-for-Work programme* in which beneficiaries worked on community projects in return for food. Beneficiaries of the free food programme received 10kgs of grain per person per month. However, the programme was affected by inadequate funding and transport shortages which resulted in beneficiaries getting less than 10kg per month (Kaseke et al. 1997:11). The Achilles heel of the free food programme was the absence of exit strategies and lack of empowerment programmes to ensure self-sufficiency (Kaseke et al. 1997:45). Typically such programmes have high administrative costs relating to procurement, storage, security and disbursement. Thus such a programme requires a robust administrative system. The country does not have such an administration system at the moment due to the brain drain. Many social workers have left the country and are now practising their trade in the Diaspora where pay is comparatively better than at home.

2.4 THE GRAIN LOAN SCHEME

The scheme was introduced in May 1995 to replace the Food-for-Work Programme. Evidently, the intention was to engage people in production on their own farms. It operated until January 1996 with the objective of enabling rural people to meet their food requirements during drought (Kaseke et al. 1997:11). The programme was aimed at

reducing the dependency of communities on government assistance as well as reducing the time and human resources needed to do the means test as this function would be done by local authorities and traditional leaders (Kaseke et al. 1997:10). Persons were given grain loans and were supposed to return, in future, the exact amount of grain borrowed. While this scheme had the potential to propel people out of poverty, it also had the potential to threaten those who defaulted with repercussions hence some small farmers were hesitant to use the facility. Logistical issues of how the grain was to be repaid were not sufficiently worked out. For instance, issues of quality were not addressed. Thus, the programme was beset by the problem of poor uptake because some beneficiaries were worried that they would not be able to repay their loans. Transport difficulties and other logistical problems meant that beneficiaries could not get their grain timeously before the planting season (Kaseke et al. 1997:12). Because the mechanisms of collecting the repaid grain were not clearly elaborated, the repayments were very low and some beneficiaries took it as a donation from government; others considered the assistance as a right or entitlement (Sithole et al. 1999).

Nutrition should have been the prime motive in Food-for-Work programmes in Zimbabwe, yet donors sometimes provided food in these programmes simply because they had surplus food to give and not because it was suitable. These programmes also tend to destroy local production in cases where the food is imported since cheaper free food may destroy the incentive to produce crops: but supports it if the food is sourced locally since it provides an economic incentive for increased production. Pilferage, decay, theft and food passing its consume-by date are some of the attendant problems associated with free food distribution.

Furthermore, while seed and fertilizer transfers have the potential to increase agricultural production, inputs, however, may end in the hands of the non-poor. There is even anecdotal evidence in Zimbabwe to suggest that inputs were sold by beneficiaries for cash which was used to buy beer.

2.5 CHILD SUPPLEMENTARY FEEDING PROGRAMME (CSFP)

The CSFP which was first introduced in 1982 and implemented in 1987 was expanded in 1992. It provided a daily supplementary meal of maize, beans, groundnuts and oil to all children under the age of five years in drought stricken areas and in need of feeding (Kaseke et al. 1997:12). This reflects its developmental nature contributing to human capital development in which both boys and girls benefited.

However, inadequate training of implementers, who were not recording stock properly and used incorrect proportions of mealie-meal, and poor roads which made some areas inaccessible led to the suspension of the programme in some areas (Kaseke et al. 1997:13). Moreover, the meals were standardised without offering options/or choices of a different menu. Compounding these problems were the issues of poor logistics, lack of transport and poor procurement procedures which ultimately hindered the realisation of the aims of the programme (Kaseke et al. 1997:14). Because of geographic targeting, some children who were not eligible also benefited thereby pushing up the costs. Adult nutrition was neglected as the focus was on children (Kaseke et al. 1997:46). The scheme overburdened teachers with the additional chore of child-feeding although the assistance of volunteers did help somewhat. Perhaps most importantly those who did not attend school did not receive food.

According to the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (2008) the Child Supplementary Feeding Programme which was initiated in October 1995 was valued at Sek 10 million (US\$ 1.25 million) and was discontinued in 1996. The project was aimed at providing nutrition and health education for children under five years and strengthening preparedness for future droughts. The Swedish government is still supporting the programme although funds for its humanitarian aid are now being channelled through non-governmental organisations (Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, 2008).

These social safety-nets were not developmental in nature (Kaseke et al. 1997:48) as they encouraged dependency on the government and donors. Because of the different qualifications needed to access the different social safety-nets, it is administratively

cumbersome for households to organise themselves to access the assistance. According to Sithole et al. (1999) the problems these programmes encountered ranged from lack of co-ordination, policy dissemination problems, lack of clear implementation guidelines, poor targeting, distance and transport problems, political interference, funding bottlenecks as well as sustainability problems (Sithole et al. 1999) and nepotism and favouritism in the disbursement of assistance (Mbetu et al. 1999). The extensive documentation requirements excluded many of the most vulnerable groups who had no proof of residence, proof of income, birth certificates and so forth (Sithole et al. 1999).

2.6 BASIC EDUCATION ASSISTANCE MODULE (BEAM)

According to the *Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme* (2006) the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) was launched in January 2001 as one component of the *Enhanced Social Protection Project* (ESPP), a collection of programmes which formed a core part of the Government of Zimbabwe's wider social protection strategy at the beginning of the millennium. The other components of ESPP are *Public Works*, *Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances*, *Essential Drugs and Medical Supplies*, and the development of a longer-term Social Protection Strategy (*Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme* (2006). According to the Government of Zimbabwe(n.d)²⁴, BEAM replaced the school-fee programme under the Department of Social Welfare. BEAM aims to reduce the number of children dropping out of school. The programme also aims to reach out to children who have never been to school due to economic hardships. According to the Government of Zimbabwe (n.d) BEAM assists children in school but who are failing to pay, or are having difficulties in paying tuition fees, levies and examination fees; children who have dropped out of school due to economic reasons; or children who have never been to school, due to economic reasons, but are of school-going age. It provides tuition and examination fees at urban primary, urban secondary and rural secondary as well school levies for both urban and rural secondary schools through community-based selection of the neediest children. Continued assistance to selected children is based on school attendance rather than on merit.

²⁴ Government of Zimbabwe (not dated). Retrieved from <http://www.pslsw.gov.zw/child%20welfare.htm>

In 2005 the BEAM budget was Z\$195 billion and it assisted 969,962 pupils representing 27 per cent of enrolment. In 2006 the budget was Z\$414 billion and was intended to assist an estimated 905,724 pupils (*Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme*, 2006). Most schools reported that drop-out rates resulting from a failure to pay school fees between 1993 and 1998 were very low (Sithole et al. 1999). *Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme* (2007) notes that some of the weaknesses of the programme include the rampant increases in school fees, and the fact that potential beneficiaries cannot be funded mid-year. All funding is only approved at the beginning of the year. This reflects some programme rigidities which do not help in assisting the needy beneficiaries mid-stream.

According to *Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme* (2007) the aim of the *Enhanced Social Protection Project* is to protect the human development investments and long term productivity of very poor households, in light of the on-going macro-economic crisis, by extending and improving targeting of formal and informal social protection mechanisms in the country. Some of the strengths of this project are: implementation which covers both rural and urban areas; the fact that implementation partners are identified at national, district and community levels; and that the project complements on-going government initiatives (*Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme*, 2007). Yet, *Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme* (2007) also notes that one of the weaknesses of this project is its focus on short-term solutions to social protection.

2.7 HEALTH ASSISTANCE

This programme attempts to help the chronically poor to have access to government assisted health care by paying for health fees at hospitals and paying for the use of specialised health equipment. According to *Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme* (2007:2) the programme has been difficult to administer and therefore has too many administrative hurdles to overcome. A shortage of health personnel, including

doctors and nurses, coupled with rampant shortages of drugs and medicines at government institutions, has dealt a death blow to the programme.

According to the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (2008) the *Health Sector Support Programme*, established in April 1997 by the Swedish Government was funded to the tune of Sek 50 million (US\$6.4 million) covering the following:

- Improving water and sanitation;
- Health education and conditions of the disabled; and
- Prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS and related diseases.

Due to sanctions imposed on the country, the programme was discontinued. Since 2000, no new programmes have been undertaken (Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, 2008).

2.8 NATIONAL AIDS COUNCIL (NAC)

The National AIDS Council has the mandate to raise awareness and craft responses to the AIDS pandemic. It is funded through a levy which imposes on all formally employed people a 3 per cent tax on their earnings. According to *the Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme* (2007) one of the strengths of this initiative is the promotion of partnerships between various stakeholders to respond to the challenges of HIV/AIDS and the co-ordination and management of the AIDS funds from national, provincial, district down to ward levels.

2.9 BASIC COMMODITIES AND SUPPLY SIDE INTERVENTIONS

The programme distributes basic commodities at affordable prices to poor people in what are called people's shops and also provides subsidies at the industry level. According to the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (2008) BACOSSSI is a multi-dimensional programme which seeks to alleviate shortages of basic commodities in the formal market and ensure the availability and affordability of basic commodities to vulnerable people, especially in the rural areas. BACOSSSI is intended to 'deal with the current market failure generated

by rampant market indiscipline by way of profiteering and side marketing at the expense of the real consumer' (Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, 2008:11).

3.0 CRITIQUE OF THE PROGRAMMES

The virtues of targeting lie in excluding those who do not qualify. As Kaseke et al. (1997) contend the error of omission [Type I error] renders a social safety net unable to reach the intended beneficiaries whilst the error of inclusion [Type II error] of the non-poor reduces the impact of a social safety net on the welfare of the poor. In a situation of mass poverty, as is in the case of Zimbabwe, the costs of committing error I are less than the costs of trying to identify the undeserving. In that case geographic targeting, namely identifying the poorest areas and assisting all residents within the area, may be meritable. To avoid the commission of Type II error, community targeting may be helpful. Furthermore, in a situation of mass unemployment, understood within the context of loss of jobs in the formal sector and a Zimbabwean (in fact Africa-wide) setting in which wage employment is minimal, means-testing becomes almost redundant as almost everyone is 'poor'. The non-poor would 'self-exclude' from the benefits intended for the poor in a form of targeting that is self-exclusionary.

The immaturity of the democracy can also be blamed for the partisanship associated with the dispensing of social-protection assistance. Food aid and seed packs are channelled on partisan lines by both governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which leaves the citizenry politically divided. This creates conflict between government and NGOs in which NGOs have been viewed by the government as working against it and the Government being viewed by NGOs as working against them. While NGOs in developed countries have worked with their governments, NGOs in Southern Africa seem to work against their governments.

The duration of any intervention must rest on the approach to be used. For instance, for humanitarian assistance on the one hand, the intervention ideally must be short-term with a quick turnaround time. There must also be the capacity to deliver and clear lines of co-

ordination as well as the necessary political support. On the other hand, for say poverty-reduction, the interventions must be of a long-term nature.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND THE WAY FORWARD

Adato et al. (2004) note that conditional transfer programmes usually tie cash and nutrition supplements to either children's attendance to school, or pregnant women's participation in preventive health care, or mothers' attendance at health and nutrition workshops: the programmes are administratively demanding and require an upgraded health and education infrastructure. Perhaps it is also time to introduce schemes in the agriculture sector in Zimbabwe whereby beneficiaries will receive seed on condition that they have a plot where they intend to plant the seed with an additional requirement to attend a short-course/workshop on farming, following which planting would proceed under group/community supervision.

It is clear from this chapter that economic, political and infrastructural issues have a bearing on the delivery of social safety-nets. To my knowledge, assessments of the impacts of social-protection measures in hyperinflationary environments such as those obtaining in Zimbabwe have not been done. Questions still remain as to how to protect the poor given an environment of harvest failures, persistent food-price escalations, currency depreciation and food shortages. Perhaps all cash transfer programmes should be converted to payment-in-kind programmes²⁵? How is it possible to control prices without undermining production and markets? More importantly, how can humanitarian assistance, or any relief for that matter, be provided when the silos are empty?

Concerning the economy, Nathaniel Manheru²⁶ (2008) wrote:

²⁵ Cash payments are rendered meaningless because the transport costs are higher than the amount to be received as public assistance. For instance, block grants to schools to buy books and furniture as well as exemptions to pay school fees by students are helpful in the circumstances.

²⁶ Nathaniel Manheru (2008), 'Dabengwa: The dream of a revalorised PF-ZAPU' *Herald*, 15 November 2008, Retrieved on 15 November 2008 from <http://www.herald.co.zw/inside.aspx?sectid=822&cat=10>

We have hit the bottom; we cannot fall. Alternative "people economies" have been evolving as interim safety nets while a new, quite national economy, is emerging.

Smith (2001) proposes that as far as possible social safety-nets should be self-targeting and be 'productivity-enhancing (for example in the form of public works, or agricultural-inputs supplementation), rather than pure transfers. This would both reduce the risk of dependency, and maximise long-term income growth among the poor. The self-targeting should be selective of limited sub-groups that everyone can agree are needy' (Smith, 2001:13). Perhaps, too, targeting should be subjected to a Consensual Approach. These issues provided the inspiration to critically analyse the situation in a quest to, first, understand the socio-politico and economic circumstances and, secondly, look for new tools to help address some of the problems from the vantage point of a poverty analyst.

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APPENDIX 1

Table 6: Political debates

Who are the beneficiaries?	Only vulnerable groups such as orphans, the disabled, and the elderly? Or people falling below a given minimally accepted standard of living? Child-headed households or just children? Families or individuals?
How many shall benefit?	Numbers
Who co-ordinates?	Government? Non-governmental organisations? Civil society? Local authorities? Individuals? The private sector? Chiefs? Councillors? Community?
What schemes are to be implemented?	Public Works? Cash transfers? Voucher/coupon transfer? Food transfer? Food-for-work? Cash-for-work? Inputs(seed/fertiliser)-for-work? Feeding scheme? In what combinations?
Type of intervention/strategy?	Focused or differentiated by area or need?

Table 7: Technical level issues

How should targeting be conducted?	Means testing? Proxy testing? Geographic? Universal? Narrow? Indices? Or any other method?
Timing	Continuous? Temporary? Time-bound? Persistent?
Capacity?	Are the technical, logistical, anti-corruption, supervisory, management skills available.
Cascading of benefits?	Transitory poor or chronic poor
Exit strategy?	How do beneficiaries exit the scheme? How does the programme end?

Table 8: Advantages and disadvantages of scope of targeting methods

Targeting			
Universal		Narrow	
Advantages	Disadvantages	Advantages	Disadvantages
Easy to administer	High incidence of leakages	Leakages can be minimized	Difficult to administer
Potential for gender-friendliness, that is non-discriminatory on the basis of gender unless it is gender-focused e.g females only or boys only	Expensive to run	Less costly to outlay	Expensive to run
Allows risk taking	Inefficient in targeting		Easily 'taken over' by the non-poor
Can either be developmental or humanitarian or both in character			Has potential for political manipulation by politicians because the benefits are limited and the beneficiaries are many.

Table 9: Advantages and disadvantages of various targeting methods

Geographic targeting	
Advantages	Disadvantages
Administratively easy and simple to run	Non-poor benefit - leakages
Cheaper to run	
Reduced transaction costs	
Individual/Household targeting	
Attempts to assist only the needy	Requires correct information on the individual/household making it administratively cumbersome
Attempts to avoid leakages	May involve travel to obtain benefits which may be a disincentive
Community targeting	
Easy to run	Destroys cohesion between communities
	Assumes the community has the capacity
Cash transfers	
Easy to administer	Create dependency
Affords beneficiaries choice	Target individuals
	In a hyperinflationary situation, the value of the assistance can be eroded before disbursement rendering the assistance worthless to obtain.
Public works	
Self-targeting	Quality of outputs generally poor
Low wages are provided	Expensive
Create new infrastructure	Distracts people from own farm activities especially in the rural areas
Labour-intensive	Requires skilled labour especially for infrastructure such as dams, irrigation equipment
Done in the neighborhood	Requires a lot of supervision with the necessary project management and technical design skills
Developmental in nature	Wage rate lower than minimum wage
Emphasise local people	Cosmetic work done/poor infrastructure created
People assert right to employment	Creates employer-employee relationship
	Potential for patronage
Enhance social contract between the state and citizens	Can be hijacked by NGOs to proliferate own agenda
Enhance societal cohesion	Work days are made short to cater for large numbers of participants
Has potential to involve large numbers of people	
Food distribution	
Provides nutrition	Creates logistical problems

Requires robust administrative systems	Breeds corruption in procurement and logistics tenders
	Food provided may be non-nutritional
	Administrative costs are high, storage, security costs have to be incurred
Supports local markets if the food is locally produced	Destroys local production and markets for food if food is imported
	Potential loss of food due to decay, theft, expiring
Agricultural inputs	
Increase output	Inputs sometimes end up in non-poor
Increase productivity	Inputs are sold for cash
Agricultural inputs-for-work	
Self-targeting	May distract small farmers from own farm production
Beneficiary may not sell own inputs	
Has potential to propel people out of poverty	
School/child feeding scheme	
Developmental in nature	Ignores the mothers and others
Builds human capital	Ignores those not of school going age
Boys and girls are educated and children are retained in schools longer	
Politically supported by political leaders and communities	Provides standardized meals and does not give options/choice in terms of menu
	Over-burdens teachers with the additional chore of feeding

CHAPTER FOUR

REVISITING THE INCOME THRESHOLD FOR MEASURING POVERTY: DEVELOPING AN ASSET-BASED POVERTY INDEX FOR AFRICAN ECONOMIES USING THE CONSENSUAL APPROACH²⁷

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a lack of multiple resources that leads to hunger and physical deprivation and poor people focus on assets rather than income, and link their physical, human, social and environmental assets to their vulnerability and exposure to risk. Definitions of poverty and its causes vary by gender, age, culture and social and economic contexts (Narayan et al., 2000:31–2).

This chapter draws on the experience of Zimbabwe to argue that the existing methodologies for measuring poverty are not very helpful for identifying the poor in order to target interventions. These measures present a methodological problem because they focus on income (headcounts, Human Poverty Index) and do not take into account the underlying asset base. Thus, an approach is needed that is better tailored to the conditions found in Africa.

Developing countries such as Zimbabwe face a multitude of problems related to targeting and the delivery of social safety-nets, from both a conceptual and a technical point of view. Conceptually, transplanting concepts from the rich to the poor seems easy but is in fact fraught with contradictions and inconsistencies when applying them to a developing country like Zimbabwe, where a self-definition of poverty based on local norms and values appears more appropriate. Technically, the delivery of social safety-nets to ameliorate the impact of poverty, droughts and other natural calamities such as cyclones and floods, especially providing protection to poor and vulnerable groups, has become a daunting and perennial task for technocrats given the frequency of these episodes lately. These mitigatory measures have to be undertaken against the backdrop in Zimbabwe

²⁷ This article was accepted by the journal, *Development Southern Africa*, subject to amendments (See the main appendix for the correspondence). It was made possible with part funding from the Ford Foundation and the School of Development Studies' African Integration Grants Programme of the University of KwaZulu Natal, Durban.

particularly of an extreme degree of political polarisation, which presents a huge challenge to technocrats in government agencies mandated to deliver these safety nets. There is thus a need for scientific methods of measuring poverty so as to target the distribution of the scarce resources in a crisis situation.

In the absence of any credible instruments for targeting crisis support, the Human Development Index (HDI) and Human Poverty Index (HPI) developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) seem to provide a logical solution. The HDI is a composite index comprising three components carrying equal weight, namely longevity as measured by life expectancy at birth, educational attainment as measured by adult literacy and an income scale as measured by the natural logarithm of real GDP per capita (UNDP, 1990). The HPI measures poverty according to the percentage of the population expected to die before the age of 40, knowledge as measured by the percentage of adults who are illiterate, and the standard of living by the percentage of people without access to safe water and the percentage of underweight children under the age of five.

There is a need for a scientific method of measuring poverty. Apart from that, the chosen method must be palatable to various interest groups such as the ruling party, the opposition, the cabinet, parliamentarians and the local leadership, as well as the general populace, and it must not invite accusations of favouritism. The inadequacies of these dominant measures, the HDI and HPI, become apparent when it comes to targeting because, as with all averages, they ignore regional specificities and nuances. Poor adjacent regions are often treated differently. In Zimbabwe, when the HDI and HPI were used for targeting, on the basis of higher literacy rates and other variables, some areas received food assistance while others did not. A local Zimbabwean chief had this to say when his people were excluded from drought relief on the basis of the HPI, while an adjacent region was receiving free food:

My children you are alienating us on grounds which we are not familiar with. My people have literally gone back to the Stone Age because they have now resorted to eating roots and berries to survive.

The need for more accurate indices is also evident from this response from a villager who emphasised local norms and practices: 'I have five cattle and three wives, five hoes and a plough, a scotch cart and, therefore, I am rich'. This is instructive because such statements reveal that poverty is also about perceptions of self. The targeting consequences are that some people may be excluded from receiving relief on one occasion but remain potential candidates for relief in future community assessments.

There is therefore a need to develop a methodology that takes cognisance of such perceptions. While income broadens choices, to rural folk it may not be the core priority in their pursuit of economic activities and livelihood. For example, they may value assets more than income because these can be acquired through barter. In Zimbabwe, prior to the fast track land reform programme which began in 2000, arable land was allocated to individual families on usufruct rights which can go for several generations (Chipika, 1998). Roads, dams and dip tanks are provided by local authorities. These constitute publicly provided goods and services often referred to as the social wage. It may therefore be argued that poverty is not simply, and perhaps not even necessarily, about income in an African rural setting – but it is about assets and natural resources. In these circumstances it would therefore be more appropriate to ask about the *minimally adequate asset level* rather than the minimally adequate income. The Minimum Income Question (MIQ) was first proposed by Goedhart et al. (1977). It asks about the monetary amounts people consider to be minimally necessary for their household to make ends meet.

The link between assets and income, from an accounting point of view, is that entrepreneurs use capital to procure assets which are the resources used in a business to generate income on a continuous basis. There are fixed assets and current assets. Among the fixed assets are the intangible ones such as trademarks and goodwill, and tangibles ones such as land and buildings and equipment. Thus a tangible fixed asset is a resource for producing goods and services, often with a long useful life, but not for resale in the normal course of business. Current assets are all assets other than the fixed ones. These are either cash or likely to be converted into cash or are consumed in the business within the current financial year or the operating cycle of the business. They include such things

as stocks – both for resale and own use – (material, finished goods and work in progress), cash at bank, cash in hand and debtors. These assets are worked to transform material, using labour, technology and other overheads, into goods and services that are then sold to generate income. The business can make either a profit or loss. The profit can be recapitalised to buy more assets and thus the cycle continues. While this appears to be a chicken and egg situation, it goes without saying that it is assets that hold the key to the generation of income on a sustained basis if worked to best advantage. Income is dependent on the value of the assets one possesses – it is a derivative of the ownership of productive resources. Assets are necessary as an input to create goods and services.

The (re)distribution of income is to a large measure dependent on education and training, while the (re)distribution of assets can be blind to education and training in the name of equity and egalitarianism and also based on the utilitarian approach to ethics that says a decision or action should be for the greater good of the majority. Resources are crucial if the population is to be economically empowered. Paucity of resources cannot be compensated for by literacy and longevity, nor can literacy and longevity be considered substitutes for the whole gamut of resources subsumed under assets; rather, they can be considered to be complementary. It can also be argued from a moral point of view that resources should be distributed on egalitarian principles for the stability of the nation-state. As Boltivnik (n.d.) notes: ‘After all, the main purpose of poverty studies should be a moral one: overcoming poverty.’

Against such a background, researchers go to the rural areas with an income questionnaire despite the fact that people place a higher value on assets than they do on income. Income estimates are usually based on recalled information and therefore are not always up to date. The questionnaires also do not fully capture the activities of such sectors as the informal sector and the huge peasant subsistence farming sector, which are substantial in developing countries. Cash is not the only measure of poverty, and it is difficult and costly to measure, and it may not be suited for targeting and monitoring policies that do not involve the transfer of cash. This is one of the major weaknesses of conventional measures.

Thresholds such as HPI, headcount ratio and the poverty gap have the potential to hide severely unequal distribution in the overall population (Anand & Sen, 2000:94). They also imply that a nation of well educated, long-lived beggars could score highly on the HDI on the counts of literacy and longevity. Moreover, the data requirements of these approaches can be beyond the means of many developing countries on the basis of cost and turnaround time. At the same time, quick, concrete, just and fair decisions need to be taken with respect to targeting in order to serve society, especially the poor and vulnerable groups. In spite of its shortcomings, the HPI is still being used in Zimbabwe to allocate funds to disadvantaged communities for help with school fees for both primary and secondary schools under the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) programme that operates through a community selection process.

It can be argued, therefore, that the existing methodologies for poverty measurement are not very helpful when identifying poor areas for intervention in Zimbabwe. For example, the HDI cannot be disaggregated to a local level. Measurement error, cost and delay mean that income based approaches to poverty measurement are not ideal for targeting and monitoring interventions. An alternative approach therefore is needed that is better tailored to the conditions found in Africa; one that recognises the role of assets, non-income dimensions of well-being such as social and natural capital, perceived needs, ease of collection, and probably analysis of data rooted in public opinion.

This chapter is organised as follows. Section 2 looks at conventional approaches to the measurement of poverty, provides a brief literature review of the money-metric (pre-Sen) and capabilities based (post-Sen) varieties of poverty measurement, and describes and critiques the two approaches. The consensual approach is examined in Section 3 showing what has been done in Europe and North America regarding how poverty is conceptualised and measured using this approach. While noting that income remains important for poverty measurements, the thesis argues for a non-income component, i.e. assets, to be included. Section 4 posits a new approach and some related notions, and Section 5 concludes.

2.0 CONVENTIONAL APPROACHES TO POVERTY MEASUREMENT

The problems of definition and measurement of poverty have preoccupied both scholars and policy makers since the days of Rowntree (1901). For the purposes of this paper, poverty measurement has been categorised into *pre-Sen* and *post-Sen* phases, to clarify the impact made by Sen, with the distinguishing milestone being Sen's postulate of capabilities. Sen defines 'capabilities' as 'the basic capacities which enable people to function', with 'commodities' and 'characteristics' being the means through which their needs are interpreted or operationalised (Sen, 1983:160). He argues that capabilities define the standard of living that a person can enjoy or not enjoy. The pre-Sen and post-Sen phases represent the income phase and the capability phase in the measurement of poverty.

2.1 PRE-SEN INDICES

The pre-Sen indices were constructed on the basis of budget standards, which were a specific basket of goods and services priced to reflect a standard of living. This methodology was used in the UK in 1901 by Rowntree (Boltvinik, 1994) and in the US in 1965 by Orshansky (Gordon & Spicker, 1999). The Achilles heel of this methodology lies in the fact that the expert defines the basket (Gordon & Spicker, 1999).

The US\$1 per day measure falls into the pre-Sen category. It has been criticised because it departs from the notion of threshold income and disregards actual living standards and local nuances in the measurement of poverty. Pogge & Reddy (2003) argue that foreign currency equivalents obtained via purchasing power parity (PPP) conceal the differences in prices of foodstuffs and basic necessities, which are substantially higher, for example, in developing countries than in the US. They argue that PPPs and Consumer Price Indices (CPIs) 'invoke substantially different notions of equivalency'. They also contend that 'the World Bank's method is internally unreliable insofar as the poverty estimates it produces depend not only on empirical data but also, and very substantially, on the chosen PPP base year'. For example, the Bank lowered South Africa's poverty rate from 23.7 per cent to 11.5 per cent merely by adjusting its base year from 1985 to 1993 (Pogge & Reddy, 2003).

Other pre-Sen indices include the head count ratio and the income gap ratio. While the headcount ratio shows the percentage of people falling below the poverty line, the income gap ratio shows the percentage of the poverty line required to bring everyone below it up to the poverty line. The Sen Index brings into the index the headcount, the poverty gap ratio and the Gini coefficient. Just like all other income indices, the Sen Index does not take assets into account. On the basis of this concern, it can be concluded that income and the resultant yardsticks are dissociated from the assets, the resources that generate income.

2.2 THE POST-SEN INDICES

The influence of Sen can best be illustrated by the indices that were constructed on the basis of his notion of capabilities. This group includes the HDI, the HPI, the Physical Quality of Life Index, the Basic Needs Index and the Capability Poverty Measure.

Arthur Pigou (1912:3) pioneered the use of income as a way of measuring welfare and well-being – ‘the measuring rod of money’. David Morris in the 1970s, as cited in UNDP (1990), posited the Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI) with the intention of focusing on development as ‘achieved’ well-being as opposed to development as an ‘activity’. He thus chose three indicators, infant mortality, life expectancy at age one, and literacy, combining them in a simple unweighted index.

The UNDP produced a Capability Poverty Measure (CPM), which measures human capabilities and functioning rather than income. It consists of three dimensions: malnutrition as measured by the proportion of under fives who are underweight (C_1), unattended births as measured by the proportion of births unattended by trained health personnel (C_2), and female illiteracy as measured by the proportion of adult women who are illiterate (C_3) (United Nations Development Programme, 1996).

In the Philippines, Raya (2001) describes a Quality of Life Index based on capabilities comprising the following: capability to be well nourished as measured by under-five nutritious status, capability for healthy reproduction as represented by births attended by

trained personnel, and capability to be educated and be knowledgeable as measured by elementary cohort survival.

Among the most popular indices in poverty measurement are the HDI and HPI. Despite their wide use, these methodologies have their own deficiencies. For example, the HDI and HPI cannot be used to calculate poverty gaps (Boltvinik, 1994), as the units of analysis are countries and the compound index is interpreted as a proxy of the headcount index. These measures can be criticised because hunger, as in the case of the chief whose subjects had resorted to eating roots and berries, is not about life expectancy and education as embodied in these measures. The other problems associated with the CPM, BNI, HDI and HPI are that they are highly aggregated (averages), they exclude other factors such as assets, and their weights appear arbitrary, as is the choice of variables.

According to the World Bank (1993:51), 'any poverty cut-off will reflect some degree of arbitrariness due to subjectivity of how the poverty cut-off is defined'. According to this perspective, the concept of poverty is a value judgment by the researcher (Boltvinik, 1994). This makes these imported methodologies inappropriate for targeting poverty as they have the potential to miss their targets. They are also largely defined in terms of constructs and cut-off levels by 'experts', politicians and individual researchers and not by the affected communities (Boltvinik, 1994; Mack & Lansley, 1985). To that end, they are divorced from the experiences of the poor and, furthermore, do not take into account the social wage and assets. Haveman & Bershadker (1998:2) note the following problems when income is used as an indicator of economic status in the official US poverty measure:

It is questionable whether annual, multi-year, or lifetime income is the appropriate measure. And as an indicator income ignores many potential sources of utility or welfare (e.g. social inclusion or security) that may be weakly tied to cash income and it ignores the taxes to which the family is liable. Using such a measure, a wealthy family with a well-educated head and substantial assets, but a year of low income, would be classified as 'poor'.

According to Boltvinik (1994) even though poverty is measured in money-metric terms, strategies to alleviate it focus on human capital (interpreted as investing in education, nutrition and health). This implies an inappropriate yardstick and therefore misdirection

in certain settings. The money-metric measures also ignore assets acquired through barter and inheritance. Land is not bought or sold in the rural areas but is passed on from generation to generation on the basis of usufruct rights.

Post-Sen measures are important in that they open and broaden the perspectives and horizons in the measurement of poverty. However, in the absence of current data, they are based on past data estimates, leaving underlying results questionable. The inclusion and exclusion of variables has been criticised as being arbitrary, not to mention the difficulty when they are being operationalised and the lack of clarity in terms of what is being measured. Some differences can also be observed between the dominant income indices (the conventional measures discussed above) and consensual measures, which are discussed in the next section. These differences are shown in Table 10. Under consensual measures I subsume subjective or qualitative measures. The dominant indices are those that have gained common, widespread usage.

Table 10: Comparison of income indices and consensual measures constructs

	Constructs of dominant income indices	Constructs of consensual measures
Basis	Individual/Household/Country	Public opinion/agreement
Inclusion of assets	Most do not take assets into account e.g. use of average incomes	Some have taken assets into account e.g. lack of goods or services considered essential by society
Reliance on income	Rely heavily on income and consumption	Some have relied heavily on income but some have attempted to go beyond income and consumption e.g. Mack & Lansley approach which asks for, e.g. ownership of a fridge, number of meals per day, reading a newspaper, etc.
Status regarding the social wage	They ignore the social wage	Capable of taking the social wage into account from a public opinion perspective – people can vote for the things they need.
Recognition of barter trade	Do not recognise barter trade	Recognise barter trade implicitly
Calculation of Income Gap Ratio	Some calculate Income Gap Ratio and some do not	Has the potential to calculate Asset Gap Ratio
Use of equivalisation scales	Some use equivalisation scales	May not use equivalisation scales – tooth for tooth, asset for asset
Position regarding sub-group nuances	May ignore regional/sub-group nuances e.g. HDI and HPI	Take cognisance of regional nuances. Socio-spatial preferences/differences taken into account
Use of country as unit of analysis	May use country as a unit of analysis e.g. HDI	Do not use country as unit of analysis but rather public opinion at household and individual level
Recognition of living standards	Ignores actual living standards e.g. HDI	Takes into account actual living standards – ‘as is’
Thrust of interventions	Yardstick is income but the interventions focus on health and education	Allow for intervention to be focused and direct – tooth for tooth
Accommodation of subjective factors	Feelings, fears, thoughts, values not accommodated	Cast net wider for values, norms and aspirations in focus group discussions
Richness of content/Level of evidence	Scant, aggregate, evidence is often pitched at the macro-level	Rich, real life, micro-level evidence
Equality and distribution sensitivity	HPI and HDI are not distribution sensitive. Sen index is.	Have the potential to reflect relative distribution sensitivity

3.0 THE CONSENSUAL APPROACH

In recent years researchers, mainly in Europe and the US, have taken a keen and renewed interest in measures of poverty that are based on socially determined norms rather than on some absolute minimum. This approach, termed the Consensual Approach to the measurement of poverty, was introduced by Mack & Lansley (1985) and the Leyden school (see Hagenaaars, 1986).

Mack & Lansley (1985:39) defined poverty in terms of 'an enforced lack of socially perceived necessities'. This means that the 'necessities' of life are identified by public opinion and not by, on the one hand, experts or, on the other, by the norms of behaviour per se (Mack & Lansley, 1985). What this approach does is to shift focus from income or some other measure of resources to actual living conditions and from value judgements by the 'expert' researcher to the diversity of public opinion regarding necessary consumption (Hallerod, 1994). Mack & Lansley selected the 35 consumption items in their study and a cut-off of 50 per cent as constituting a majority and adopted an index score of three consumption items as constituting poverty. A person is classified as poor if s/he is lacking three of the 35 items. What Mack & Lansley did was to further refine the theoretical and empirical work of Townsend (1979 & 1985) following which their own work was replicated in Europe by other researchers. (see for example Nolan & Whelan, 1996).

This wide variety of studies in Europe provides a fertile theoretical basis on which to build a case and to experiment with poverty measures. Consensual measurement of poverty is under-studied in the context of the African experience, though it can be acknowledged that researchers conducting participatory assessments under the auspices of the World Bank have begun to study poverty through the eyes of the poor. A number of countries in Africa such as Zambia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar and Mozambique have carried out these exercises (May, 1998). According to Norton (2001) the shift in approach by the Bank was to broaden the conceptual and methodological approach to the assessment of poverty.

These assessments have employed to a large extent the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach, which entails participatory thematic mapping, wealth and well-being ranking, Venn diagrams, trend analysis and time lines. Participatory Poverty Assessments have also been used in various countries to enrich the understanding of poverty. These had a different objective and were not looking for a threshold. An immediate shortcoming of the *consensual approach*, as used in Europe and North America is the continued reliance on income (Minimum Income Question) and consumption (Proportional Deprivation Index) as postulated by Hallerod (1994) or earnings (self-reliance) as

postulated by Haveman (1999). Although consensual in methodology, these studies remain money-metric based. This paper proposes a methodology which seeks to shift from an income-based to a non-income-based measure of poverty on the grounds that assets matter more than income in a rural African setting where, for instance, barter is common and there is very little wage employment. Moreover, assets, especially the tangibles, have the potential to generate multiple incomes. For instance, having a cow brings in income in various ways. As an asset, it can have as many as four income streams – the meat, the milk, the dung and the status it confers in the community. Men in an African society can ‘earn’ their status politically rather than through income, since money is ‘invisible’ to the community. Their interest is in what they see rather than what is in the bank and which they may never know about.

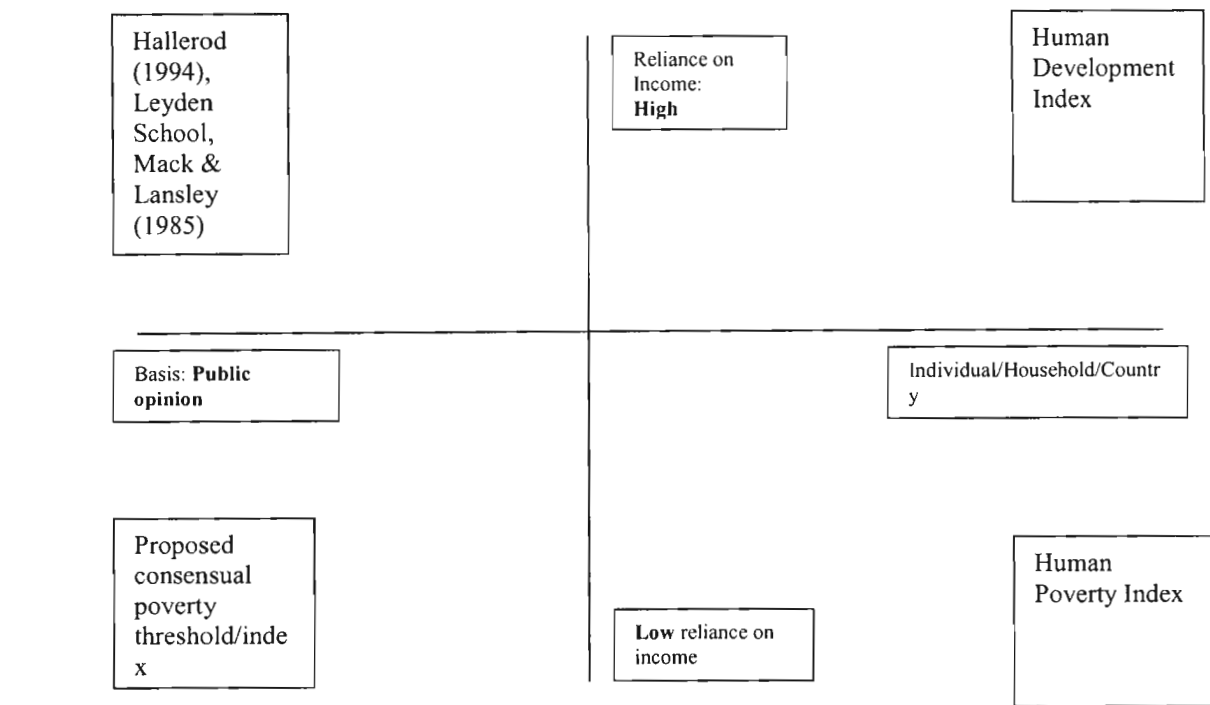
The chapter argues therefore that income plays a fairly marginal role in daily transactions of rural people’s livelihoods. Hallerod (1994) notes that the major motivation behind efforts to devise direct measures of poverty and deprivation is a belief that economic resources, particularly when measured by income alone, may not satisfactorily reflect standards of living. People have different constraints on their ability to transform income into living standards, and people live in different circumstances, which can only partly be taken into account using practical equivalence scales (Hallerod, 1994:25). While the author agrees with Hallerod on most of the points he raises, he does not agree with the use of equivalent scales because costs/values can be attached to assets, as is done in the commercial world.

This paper is motivated by a keen interest in widening the debate in order to develop instruments for targeting that are simple to use, easily understandable to policy makers and their constituencies and, more importantly, that use non-money metric measures as the core of the index. According to Hallerod (1994:31) it is definitely easier to use poverty research as an argument in public debate ‘if definition and measurement are based on a method that most people find intuitive and which can be understood without difficulty’.

4.0 TOWARDS THE NEW APPROACH

The perceptual map shown in Figure 1 depicts an identified gap in a measurement of poverty in an asset based Consensual Poverty Index. Using this map, income and non-income measures are compared on two qualities: reliance on income and the basis of the construct (public opinion or individual/household/country). Based on these qualities, an index is slotted into an appropriate segment. The diagram shows that on one hand the HDI relies heavily on income and does not depend on public opinion in its construct but rather on country-level data, hence its location in the upper right hand quadrant. On the other, the HPI relies neither on income nor public opinion in its construct but is based on country-level data, hence its location in the lower right hand quadrant of the diagram. The Leyden School, Mack & Lansley (1985), Hallerod (1994) and others rely highly on income but relies on public opinion hence their location in the upper left hand quadrant. The proposed Index that the author envisages to develop will depend less on income but will still retain the notion of consensus as expressed by public opinion hence its location in the lower left hand quadrant.

Figure 1: Perceptual Map



The proposed poverty measure will be constructed using the Consensual Approach but based on an assumption that assets as valued by public opinion are more important than income. In the *consensual approach*, public opinion is used, for example via a ballot, to determine the socially perceived necessities of life (see Mack & Lansley, 1985).

Thus, the minimum asset basket should represent a snapshot of the asset holding of the units of analysis at a given point in time and space informed by culture, religion, traditions and norms. Ultimately, the asset bundle must reflect the local landscape and indigenous ways of livelihood although defined in monetary terms for it to be able to talk to income. Given the above, it is now possible to firstly define an asset-threshold, secondly value it and thirdly come up with an asset-poverty line against which a household is considered poor if it falls below the threshold (Mtapuri, 2005).

5.0 CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to extend the discussion on the measurement of poverty by revisiting the income threshold and supporting a notion of asset threshold for developing countries using the consensual approach. It also contends that rather than use income generic measures of poverty in developing countries, a new approach should be researched that takes into account the underlying asset base and prevailing norms and values in self-definition of poverty. This chapter makes three contributions. First, it postulates developing an asset threshold for poverty that can be used to count the poor, rank geographic areas and provide some spatial depiction of poverty in the form of Asset Poverty Maps. Poverty will be defined as a shortfall from the asset-threshold, the *minimally adequate asset level* (MAAL). It should be borne in mind, however, that the asset threshold is not transferable to other places if typicality cannot be established. In other words, the asset-threshold is contextual and location-specific in nature, which could be one of its shortcomings.

Second, it reflects on the income and non-income components of poverty and the measurement methods and brings out the importance of the asset-threshold approach. It argues that researching a new asset threshold is worthwhile in so far as using such a threshold as a basis for intervention makes the intervention direct, for example, asset for

asset. Governments and NGOs will find an entry point with targeted interventions, which can be administered piecemeal depending on the available capacities. Ultimately, life can be self-sustainable as households and communities become empowered. Moreover, an asset-threshold brings out particular specific and peculiar circumstances of the poor as well as providing a fresh perspective and framework for measuring poverty. Thus an asset-threshold can be useful for purposes of allocating resources and setting and monitoring targets.

Third, it shows that assets are multi-dimensional because they include income or cash. Given the shortcomings of income measures, the design of social programmes cannot rest solely on income related indices since income does not fully reflect equity and the situation of the poor. Ngwane et al. (2001) notes that 'different measures of poverty give different pictures about the number of people who are poor'. Thus, the quest for a home-grown poverty measure is imperative.

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CHAPTER FIVE

POVERTY DIAGNOSTIC MODEL²⁸

The argument in this chapter is that the mere absence of resources provides insufficient grounds for the description of an individual as ‘poor’ since it takes no note of that person’s needs and wants. The question posed is then how to best achieve ‘livelihood outcomes’? In this it follows two approaches from the literature on health economics; these assess the process by which individuals decide how to react to health issues, i.e. whether or not to seek treatment, change behaviour etc. The process is outlined in an eight stage process; these stages being further interpreted by a note on belief formation. The issue presented is that some people accept their poverty, while others seek to escape it. The policy maker’s problem is how to best respond to these two groups. The article proposes that the poverty diagnostic model can provide a basis for coherent policy design.

The argument picks up on a common problem facing decision makers, the difficulty of managing development when confronted by a range of ad hoc policies that cannot be compared.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Developing a theory is much like tracing a consistent path through a maze of theoretical options. The maze may be quite complex and certainly the number of potential paths is huge, but the most plausible path, given current knowledge, may be relatively short and sweet (Baars, 1988:360).

In order to get closer to a scientific, multidimensional understanding of poverty, this chapter introduces a new model which builds upon the models commonly used in the health sector. It is distinguishable from the models in the health sector in terms of its focus. While health models focus on health problems, this model focuses on poverty and

²⁸ This article was submitted to the journal, *Social Action* on 2 Feb 2008. The correspondence is contained in the main appendix.

poverty perceptions. It adapts, modifies and customises these for use in development studies in general and poverty analysis in particular.

This modification and customisation is important in that we are now able to use this tool to interrogate what the poor feel about their poverty (perhaps he/she who feels it knows) and what factors enable exit from poverty or perhaps understand what factors keep them locked in poverty by asking the poor, on a one-on-one basis, by way of counselling and mentoring sessions. Concomitant to that, what factors must be included (excluded) in a poverty index. The introduction of this tool into social science research is the major contribution of this chapter. In terms of application, it precedes sustainable livelihood approaches and complements rather than supplants them.

Section 1 introduces. In Section 2, I provide a conceptual framework which comprises a brief synopsis of the models used in the health sector. Section 3 introduces the poverty diagnostic model (PDM). Section 4 compares and contrasts the sustainable livelihood approaches and the poverty diagnostic model. In Section 5, I highlight the importance of the PDM. I conclude in Section 5.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 HEALTH BELIEF MODEL (HBM)

The Health Belief Model (HBM) describes perceptions concerning the threat or susceptibility and severity of a health problem, the benefits of avoiding that threat, and the factors that influence the decision to act (National Institutes of Health, 2005:12).

Broadly, the HBM asserts that there are six constructs that influence people's decisions:

- Believe they are susceptible to the condition (perceived susceptibility)
- Believe the condition has serious consequences (perceived severity)
- Believe that taking action would reduce their susceptibility to the condition or its severity (perceived benefits)
- Believe costs of taking action (perceived barriers) are outweighed by the benefits

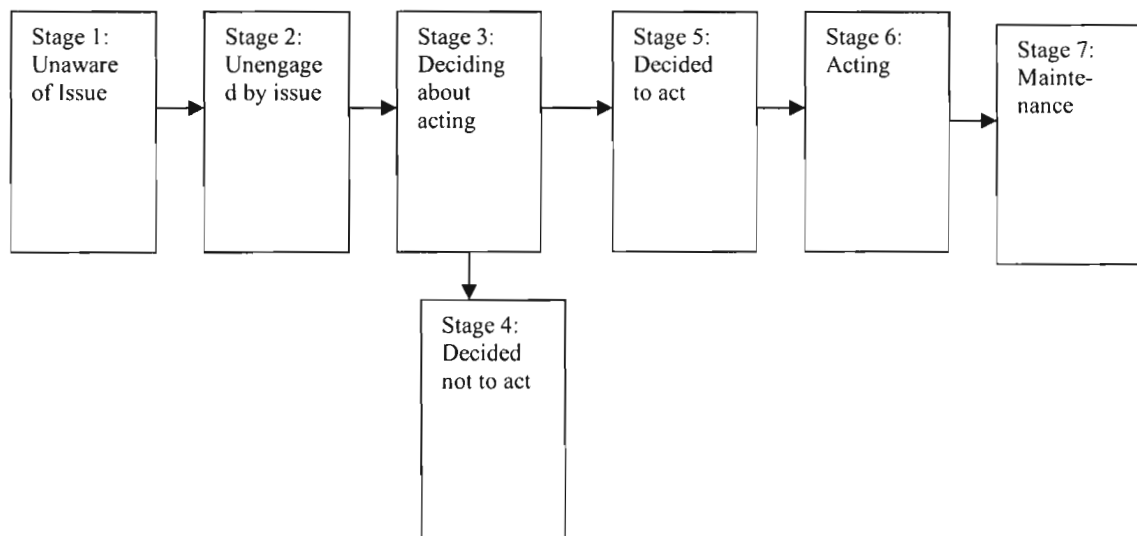
- Are exposed to factors that prompt action (cue to action)
- Are confident in their ability to successfully perform an action (self-efficacy).

These are constructs that motivate people to seek or not seek treatment against their diseases or ailments.

2.2 PRECAUTION ADOPTION PROCESS MODEL (PAPM)

This model has seven stages which range from lack of awareness to maintenance of behaviour. These stages are shown in Fig. 2 below:

Figure 2: Precaution Adoption Process Model



The theory postulates that a person may be completely unaware of a hazard/disease. That person may become aware of it but remains unengaged (stage 2). In stage 3 the person considers deciding to act on the issue. Then they either decide not to act, stage 4 or stage 5, the person decides to act. Stages 6 and 7 are characterised by action and the subsequent maintenance of a behaviour. According to this model, a person cannot revert to stages 1 and 2, while in other stages there is room to regress. The model recognises that people who are unaware of an issue or unengaged and therefore less concerned by it face different barriers from those whom have decided to act (National Institutes of Health, 2005:19).

This model states that people can decide or decide not to act against their ailments/habits. When they decide to act, for example, to quit smoking, they can do so and be able to quit smoking and maintain a non-smoking habit.

2.3 THE POVERTY DIAGNOSTIC MODEL (PDM)

Understanding the causes and consequences of poverty involves looking beyond the statistics to examine the processes and events that expose people to poverty, the conditions that prevent their escape and thus lead to its entrenchment, and the consequences of poverty for those forced to experience it (Saunders, 2004:2).

The PDM looks at the individual as the unit of analysis and change. In developing this model, the overriding consideration or questions were: does, for instance, culture/ethnicity/norms matter in shaping poverty perceptions? If yes, what else? If not what then shapes perceptions of poverty? Poverty also invokes and conjures vulnerability meaning a poor person's susceptibility to more poverty as a consequence of social, economic, cultural, legal and political factors.

Furthermore, culture may engender a spirit of subservience, obedience, deontology (accept things as given without questioning them), while the legal and political environments may well be oppressive, cruel, repressive, suppressive, stifling and unfair. The legal and political environments may also be libertarian, democratic, tolerant, laissez-faire, liberal and egalitarian. All these impact on poverty in many ways including breeding stigma which manifests itself in shame, humiliation, embarrassment, disgrace, blame, fault, blameworthiness and dishonour (as expressed by the poor themselves). Oyey (2002:2) sees as negative the stereotypical portrayal of poor people as 'lazy, dirty, criminal, sinful, producing too many children, greedy for social support'. To some extent this model will allow us to move away from the stigma that portrays poor people as such. Thus the perceptions of the poor about their status has to be elaborately identified, defined and described.

The literature shows that poverty is influenced by factors which are both self-inflicted and inflicted by other agents; various factors impact poverty positively by decreasing it or

negatively by increasing it; shocks of all kinds impact on these factors at all levels and in turn impact poverty. And some of these forces are mutually reinforcing, some are causes of poverty and some result from poverty. Reardon and Vosti (1995:1496) point out that with typologies ‘we begin by examining the asset portfolio of the rural poor, asking the question: poor in what?’ That is what this model attempts to help unpack as a precursor to the development of a home-grown poverty index for African economies.

Thus, the PDM consists of the following components.

- Identification and description of internal and external forces at the macro- (global/national), meso- (community) and micro- (family/individual) levels through data collection.
- Determination and assessment of poverty through data analysis;
- Develop livelihood interventions/strategies;
- Implement the eight stage action model; and
- Aim to achieve specific livelihood outcomes.

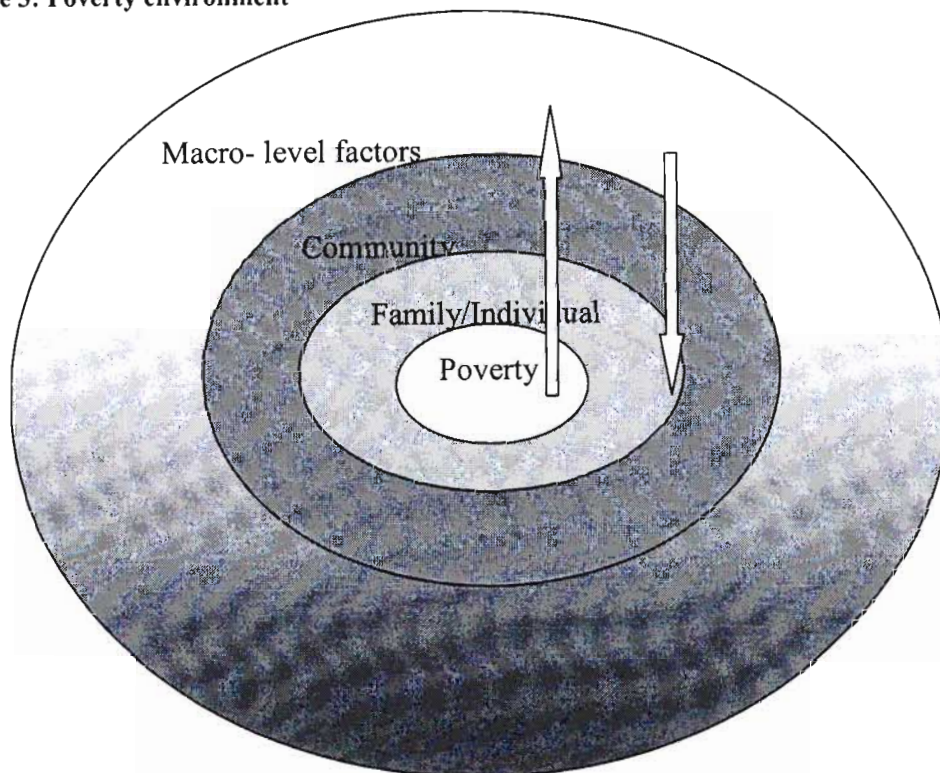
I shall distinguish here between internal and external forces. Internal forces are those forces arising from social factors such as age, race, education, skills, experience, beliefs, status, gender, marital status, family composition, living conditions and social services as well as factors of a relational nature in social systems such as marriage, divorce, friendship, parenting, kinship and networks. These factors synergise, harmonise, collude, conspire, dissipate, diffuse, exaggerate, over- and understate poverty both in unison and in disunity to produce undesirable poverty outcomes of destitution, helplessness, hunger and starvation which are invariably associated with poverty.

External/exogenous factors are factors that are outside the influence of the individual as a unit. These factors include social, political, demographic, economic/markets, historical, technological, geographical, infrastructural, cultural/ethnic (standards and norms), legal, environmental, asset and natural endowments, international forces and so forth. These forces are those that are beyond ones control as an individual or even a household,

community or social grouping. Based on the premise that physical environment, economic, social and other factors may create poverty stimuli before people begin to interact with the environment, we want to understand where and when these factors interface before affecting the individual. Furthermore, in developing this model, the question was: Do the social, economic and physical environment create a stimulus for poverty? Or does poverty represent these forces in disequilibrium? Alternatively, because poverty is the antithesis of wealth, does wealth therefore represent a balance of these forces?

In poverty analysis, some people believe there are things beyond their control as a result of fate/destiny/ancestors/superstition. Therefore it becomes pertinent to ask the poor whether being in poverty (or being out of it) is within their control. Figure 3 shows the environment within which such perceptions are created and nourished.

Figure 3: Poverty environment



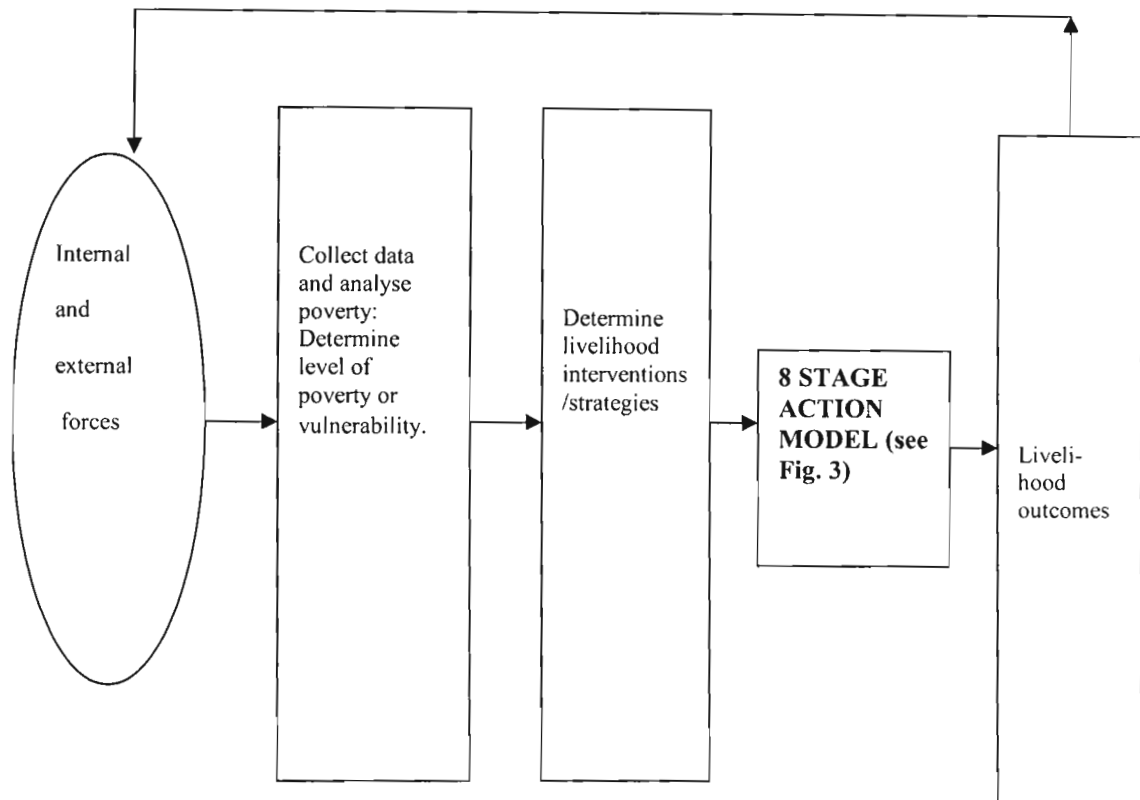
Values, beliefs, observation, norms, standards, intentions, information, experience, skills and abilities, attitudes, views and opinions, cognition, motivations, behaviour, patronage, capabilities, functionings and gender relations also have an effect on poverty. These cut across at the individual, community (norms and standards) to the macro levels (e.g. patronage). Gorin and Arnold (1998:32) note that the emphasis on community is explicitly political in that the community becomes a mediating structure between the domain of the everyday life of the individuals (micro-level) and the larger social/political/economic context within which individuals live (macro-level). I argue here, given the foregoing, that families and communities show nuances and norms that are of interest in order to characterise poverty's manifestations and help us contextualise it.

The outcome of the interactions and interplay of these factors results in re-cycled and the formation of new configurations such as the inclusion of capacities and capabilities because these can support or inhibit growth at the individual, family and community levels necessitating adaptations to achieve functionings. Arnold and Janssen (1998:7) define functionality (as opposed to functionings) as the ability to carry out a given task and assert that when this is impaired it becomes necessary to adjust to the environment to be able to fulfill functions.

Smith (1983) as cited in Arnold and Janssen (1998:9) asserts that health in the eudaimonistic model focuses on the entirety of the [human] organism, including the physical, social, aesthetic and moral – not just behavioural and physiologic – aspects and, to that end, to be healthy is a goal toward which the human system must strive in order to provide wholeness. This was stated in relation to health and I argue that the same premises should/can be carried through to poverty. The following question begs answers: Is it the interactions and flux of these socio, economic, political, cultural, spiritual, psychological, physical forces that result in poverty (or lack of it)? And perhaps poverty is an evolving concept which cannot be pinned to a single concept.

Below is the diagrammatic presentation of the Poverty Diagnostic Model, Fig. 4.

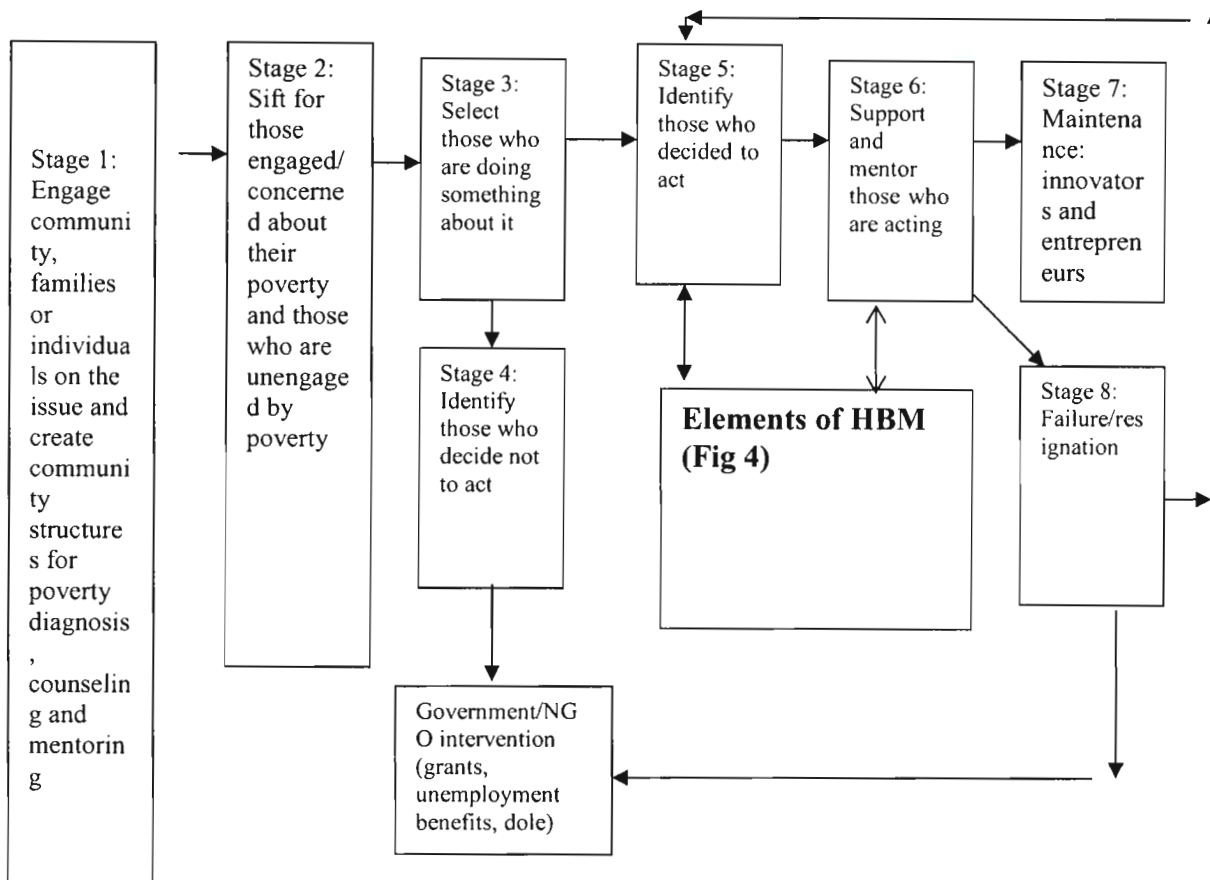
Figure 4: Poverty Diagnostic Model



This model presents the interplay of both internal and external factors whose impacts need to be understood to achieve desired livelihood outcomes. To do so, one needs to firstly, collect data and analyse it to be able to determine the level of poverty or vulnerability within a given space. Secondly, determine the livelihood interventions/strategies that are context-specific and with potential to make a positive impact on the individual or community depending on the target of the intervention. The eight stage action model is then executed.

At any point in the eight stage action model there will be groups of people who will require different actions and interventions (see Fig. 5 below).

Figure 5: Eight Stage Action Model



The eight stage model attempts to position people into typologies. At stage 1 you engage the community, families or individuals on the issue and create community structures for poverty diagnosis, counselling and mentoring. At Stage 2 you separate those who are engaged/concerned about their poverty and those who are unengaged by poverty. At this stage you are trying to identify those who are ‘no longer bothered by their poor situation’ to the extent that they just ‘accept’ it – or have given up. In other words those who, even knowing their poor status, are indifferent and are unengaged. At Stage 3, you identify those who are deciding to do something about their predicament. Among these would be those who decide not to act (Stage 4) and those who decide to act (Stage 5).

The interventions, termed level 1 interventions, for those in stage 5 and 6 would take the form of: poverty alleviation; poverty prevention; risk reduction: social responsibility; empowerment; poverty elimination and combinations of these. Those who graduate to

stage 7, the strategies, termed level 2 strategies, would involve: (health) wealth promotion; (health) wealth protection; and surveillance and data systems. Through the identification of certain ‘transition points’, the unique needs, behaviours and motivations of certain populations can be targeted (Arnold and Janssen, 1998: 7). In stages 5 and 6, elements of the Health Belief Model as well as the Stages of Change become important.

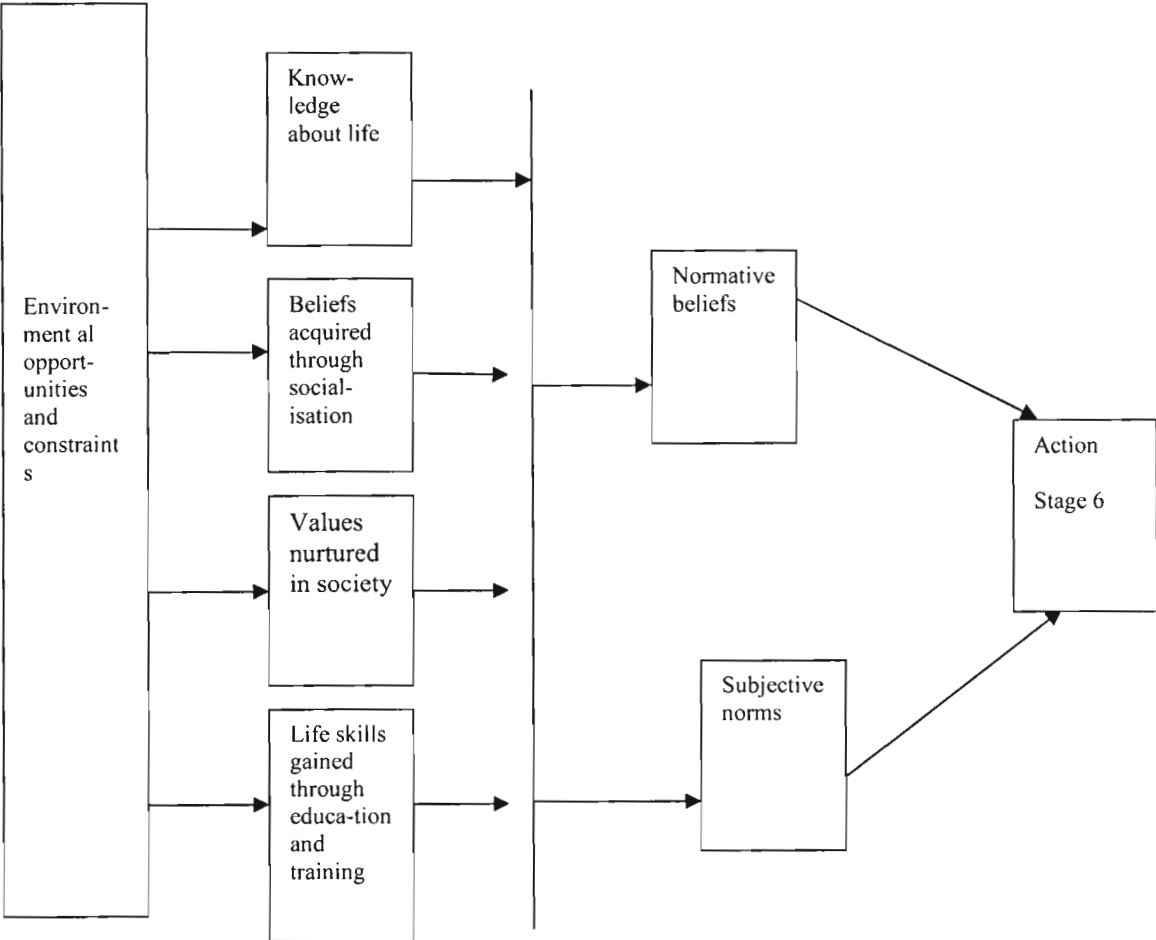
With respect to the Health Belief Model, the following concepts are pertinent. On one hand, **predisposing factors** affect an individual’s willingness to change and are those factors that motivate or provide reason for behaviour and include knowledge, attitudes, values, perceptions, cultural beliefs and readiness to change. On the other, **enabling factors** are those which include resources, supportive policies, assistance and services. According to Gorin and Arnold (1998: 23), enabling factors that facilitate or present obstacles to change include the availability and accessibility of skills, resources and barriers that help or hinder the desired behaviour. **Reinforcing factors** provide rewards to continue with behaviour once initiated – social support, praise and reassurance (National Institutes of Health, 2005:41).

According to Gorin and Arnold (1998:23) reinforcing factors refer to rewards or feedback, given to persons adopting a certain behaviour, that influence continuing with that behaviour. In implementing the PDM, those who succeed can pursue level 2 interventions. In Stage 8, among those who fail, sift for those who want to try again. These can then be located in Stage 5 with new programmes and incentives. Stage 4 identifies those candidates for Government and other agents’ support, for example, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) through grants, unemployment benefits, pensions, relief aid, dole and so forth. This category, may, or may not, include orphans and the elderly. Taking HBM as a value-expectancy theory, Janz, Champion and Strecher (2002:47) interpreted it as follows: (1) the desire to avoid illness or not to get well (value) and (2) the belief that a specific health action available to a person would prevent (or ameliorate) illness (expectation). Thus, we can recast this to poverty analysis as follows: (1) the desire to avoid poverty (value) and (2) the belief that a specific action available to a person would prevent (or ameliorate) poverty (expectation). We, thus, find potential

utility in the Health Belief Model in the realm of poverty analysis. In implementing the PDM it becomes imperative to carry out diagnosis with periodic check-ups as is done in the medical field in order to identify and help the laggards.

Using this model, there is need for tailor-making strategies for starters, doubters and laggards. This would be an attempt to take into account people who take their poverty as *fait accompli* resulting from their fate or destiny. In many ways it would be necessary to disabuse people of such notions and throw light on existing opportunities. People acquire certain knowledge, attitudes, habits, beliefs, values and skills through life experiences (see Fig. 6 below) which engender some normative and subjective beliefs for action. At this action stage, these beliefs must be taken into account especially in the **Eight Stage Action Model**.

Figure 6: Beliefs Model

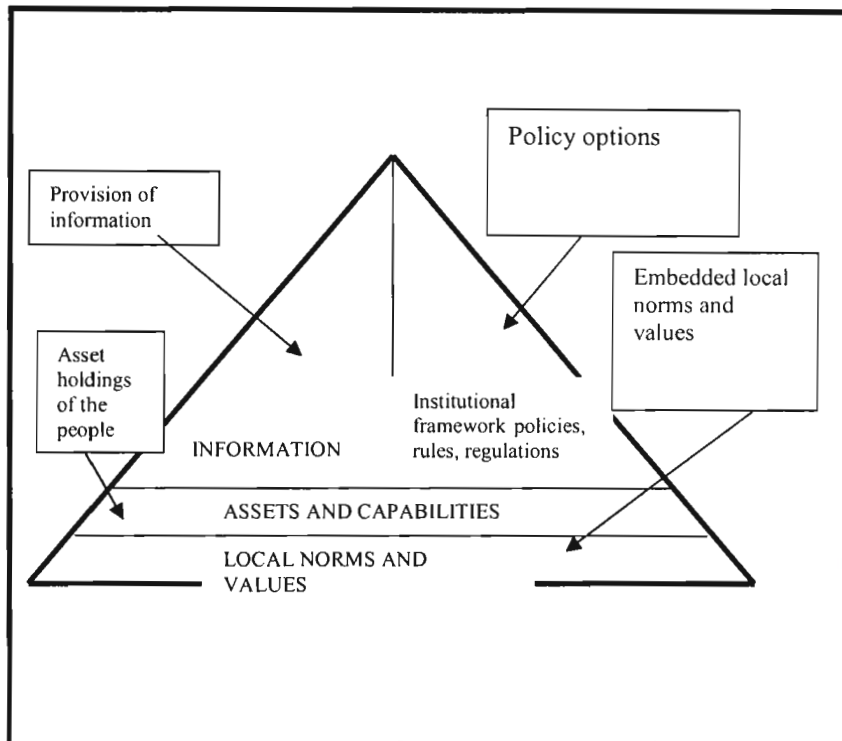


The diagram illustrates the forces that have been taken into account when working with the poor at Stage 6. Firstly, the model recognizes that there are opportunities in the environment that people can take advantage of given such a 'conductive' environment. Secondly, it recognises that there are constraints in the same environment. These constraints impact on a person's knowledge, beliefs, values, skills to produce normative beliefs and subjective norms which may lead to action or inaction on a continuum that spans from action to inaction. Values are the things that we hold dear and respect, one might value a house, another might value a pet rooted in some cultural context. It follows, therefore, that understanding local norms and values becomes imperative for poverty alleviation, reduction and elimination. Given this model, we observe that multiple factors affect behavioural outcomes and perhaps perceptions of poverty.

Poverty, it appears, is a result of the mode of transactions between the individual and his/her environment against a backdrop of different ordinances governing that interaction from context to context. Because poverty is multi-dimensional, attack on it must use multiple approaches undergirded by a mutually beneficial coalescence of forces in the transactions between the individual/family/community and the environment. In that sense, person-environment relationships become important and assume new meaning. Taking a cue from feminist discourses, people must be able to achieve some self-determination in the conduct of their lives within the prevailing regulatory parameters of the communities in which they reside.

Again from feminists, we get the idea of the legitimation of personal, as well as community, experience. Based on these belief systems, Fig. 7 below illustrates the relationships where assets appear as the foundation, as we rely on them to eke out a living. Furthermore, efforts to eradicate poverty should be anchored on a solid informational basis of its causes, determinants, impacts, effects, consequences and the linkages between them leading to the diffusion of anti-poverty education in a pro-active manner if the intention is to eliminate it.

Figure 7: Relational Configuration



Given the above, the model suggests using one-on-one interventions to influence behaviour change. Perhaps, one-on-one interventions become imperative to influence the poor's perceptions of poverty as is done in the health sector covering patient education.

Values have been included in the tool because as Gorin and Arnold (1998:14) notes, values are fundamental to health [in this case, poverty]; to value something is to choose it for its own sake in preference to other alternatives. We ask: To what extent is poverty driven by and explained by beliefs, attitudes, values and knowledge? Cultural values, attitudes and behaviours are seen as an integral part of a personal definition of health and disease (Arnold and Janssen, 1998:10). The question is: Can poverty be defined as a reflection of an individual's cultural values, attitudes and behaviours?

Using this model, however, we are able to acknowledge that we live in societies with values and norms. Oyen (2002:3) is of the view that the extent and characteristics of poverty depends on the cultural context in which poverty is formed and defined, the way people experience their poverty, and the opportunities that the culture and organizational set-up allow for moving in and out of poverty.

In the final analysis, Oyen (2002:3) contends: ‘we know much less about the processes leading to poverty and sustaining poverty’ and advocates for the identification of poverty producing agents from first line, second, third and so forth. For example, Oyen (2002:4) contends that if a mining company produces ill-health and poverty due to an unhealthy environment and according minimal protection to workers, and firing those who protest and organise, the first line perpetrators would be management of the industry who gives the orders. We are, however, still at a loss as to why shouldn’t people act against their poverty? Is it because of rules, regulations, powerlessness, values, fate and so forth?

I shall now do a comparative analysis of the Sustainable Livelihood Approaches and the Poverty Diagnostic Model.

3.0 COMPARISON OF SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS AND THE PDM

Table 11 below shows a self-explanatory comparison of sustainable livelihood approaches.

Table 11: Sustainable livelihood approaches

Sustainable Livelihood Approaches	Focus	Uses and activities	Asset categories	Agency approach
CARE (1994)	Sectoral focus	Relief through development: livelihood protection, promotion and provisioning	Human (livelihood capabilities) Social (claims and access) Economic (stores and resources)	People-centred
DFID (1998)	Resource and sectoral focus	Requires support from top, poverty elimination linked to rights through development project cycle	Human (skills, knowledge, good health) Social Capital (networks, groups, relationships of trust) Natural Capital (land, water, wildlife, biodiversity, environment) Physical (transport, shelter, water, energy, communication) Financial (savings, credit, remittances, pensions)	People-centred, multi level partnership, stresses on household level empowerment, analysis of strengths, micro-macro links
OXFAM (1993)	Environmental care	Strategic planning in development emergency, seldom at field level	Human Social Natural Physical Financial	People-centred, participatory analysis linked to social and human rights, loose idea applied across decentralized organization
UNDP (1995)	Reaction against economic and employment focused initiatives	Country programme planning, small and micro enterprises for sustainable human development	Human Social Natural Physical Economic including political (policies), Driven by assets, knowledge and technology.	Links micro-macro includes governance issues, adaptive strategies for shocks and stress. Emphasis is on technology, micro-macro links as well as strengths not needs.

Source: Adapted from Carney et al. (1999)

While the main strength of these sustainable livelihood approaches shown in Table 11 is that they are currently being tried on the ground and lessons are being learned moving

from theory to practice, the asset defining terms of human, social, natural, physical, financial capital carry with them operational vagueness at implementation stages. For instance, Oyen (2003:3) notes that

the concept of social capital gives rise to much confusion because of its links to a neutral discourse of development and co-operation among actors, minimizing class, ethnic, gender and inter-generational conflicts which constantly oppose the actors who compete to make use of resources, with interests which are opposed rather than co-operative.

Furthermore, according to Mowafi and Khawaja (2005:4) ‘as poverty statistics are generally collected through household living standard surveys, the relative needs and consumption patterns of individual members are not adequately taken into account’. While the sustainable livelihood approaches put more emphasis on community as opposed to the individual, community is not homogeneous (see also Narayan, 1999).

The other drawbacks of the sustainable approaches are that: they have a sectoral focus which necessarily leaves out other sectors (rural versus urban); some have their entry point at the top with governments (for example UNDP and DFID); they emphasise either the community or household (for example DFID); and they are niched at strategic planning level with a focus on emergency relief (OXFAM).

The PDM on the other hand is implemented at the individual level whereas sustainable livelihood approaches assume one size fit all as the presupposition is steeped either in community or household. The PDM has the potential to take into account the strengths and needs of women, children and the physically challenged. It can be shaped, guided, informed, and elaborated by the available resources and capacities to address the multifaceted symptoms of poverty as well as the needs of individuals given their strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and constraints in their environment. It has the potential to recognise aspects such as gender and power relations with room to interrogate these during implementation.

3.1 IMPORTANCE OF THE MODEL

Principally, the desire to understand the etiology or causal agents of poverty and develop a poverty index for African economies undergird the desire to build this framework inasmuch as perceptions of poverty from the perspective of the poor may help in unbundling and unpacking the motives of the poor regarding their situations. From a policy point of view, the PDM helps to strategise the form and content of the targeted interventions. From a purely scientific point of view, it helps to articulate assumptions and hypotheses from which to generate new knowledge and enrich the scientific enterprise and ultimately the poor (as beneficiaries of the research product), policy (through informed interventions), and society (increase in knowledge and a better standard of living).

Furthermore, understanding perceptions underpinned by a theoretical framework help to clarify constructs and constructions in the social sphere and relations between them in the real world. Perhaps this model will help solve problems related to poverty and its alleviation in which people are the key drivers of that process steeped in their norms, standards and value systems. Thus, in many ways the models on human behaviour help us to craft programmes and interventions that bring meaning to the lives of those affected by poverty if planning, implementation and evaluation of these programmes is done in a holistic manner with *a priori* understanding of the perceptions of the subjects. The model is envisaged to be a useful tool for defining and assessing poverty.

A robust and credible new framework for identifying and measuring poverty is needed to provide the basis on which anti-poverty strategies, policies and programs can be developed, implemented, monitored and evaluated. The bottom-line of the 'poverty measurement debate' is that we must understand what poverty is before we can take action to reduce it (Saunders, 2004:1).

Cheru (2006:359) observes that poor diagnosis of poverty leads to the misallocation of expenditure on poorly defined objectives and programmes thereby reducing the potential contribution of the Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper (PRSP) initiatives. The World Bank (n.d) considers a PRSP to be a country's macroeconomic and social policies and

programmes to promote growth and reduce poverty. The World Bank also considers a PRSP as necessary for external financing needs and they are prepared by governments through a participatory process involving civil society and development partners, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Of interest to us is the need to deepen our understanding of how individuals and households behave in the face of poverty and how they decide to change (or not to change) their lives for the better. We want a model that helps us spruce up the confusion surrounding the constraints and limiting factors in exiting poverty as well as the thought processes of the poor and the concomitant conditioning giving rise to this.

Thus, the PDM may herald systematic, theory-based research on poverty containing the following qualities: adaptability to different contexts, hence, context-sensitive; local norms compliant; flexible; all embracing and accommodative in that it accommodates diversity within a group; supportive with a perceptive fit; maintains macro-micro linkages²⁹; dynamic and user-friendly and allowing for greater disaggregation of information.

The model can help in the management of poverty programmes aimed at reducing vulnerability and poverty within poor communities. The use of the PDM will inform the decision to overhaul either behaviours or perceptions for the good of the individual and society as a whole. Theory can highlight and flag symptoms of problems and cause-effect relations. It helps, for instance within the policy framework, to assist practitioners and politicians with what they need to know before developing interventions informed by a deeper understanding of the underlying problems. It also helps in the identification of indicators to be monitored and evaluated and particularly with regard to how and where these interventions should be directed.

The model helps in the analysis of norms that influence people's livelihood strategies. Using indigenous knowledge bases, the model can be used to craft coping and adaptive

²⁹ Micro is represented by an individual or family; and macro as represented by a group, community or whole population.

strategies by uncovering people's priorities and ensuring that they are addressed. The model allows us to look at the people's strengths as well as their weaknesses. Through poverty diagnosis, which will be done as is in the health sector where doctors look at/examine the symptoms to reach to the source of the problem, (in this case we prescribe community medicine) people can be given a window through which they can break out of the cycle of poverty.

Thus the model is capable of taking into account the issues of gender, HIV/AIDS, food security, income and expenditure, asset holdings, ethnicity, socio-economic status, duties and entitlements, environment, aesthetics including those of a psychological and spiritual nature, as the assessment is done at the individual level. According to Family Health International (2002) the merging of components from various theories is common, as researchers and programmers seek to gain a better understanding of how behaviour change occurs. Perhaps this model may well lead to the elucidation of the role of, for example, age, culture, gender in development in general and poverty in particular and, importantly, to portray a unique picture of that development at the individual, family and community levels. There are benefits that accrue to the individual by leaping out of poverty such as the prospects of a better life for self and community characterised by a higher standard of living for all. As such, it is necessary to instill the belief in people that it is better to improve one's lot than to remain in poverty.

Given the flux and context of these influences, unpacking the nature, composition and influence of these forces allows the determination of the major influences of context-based poverty. Concomitant to this is the derivation of the appropriate data collection methodologies as well as derivation of appropriate poverty indices. Thus the model has the potential to inform the research method to use when undertaking a survey. There are various research methods among which ethnographic; case studies; household/demographic/health surveys; focus group discussions; and triangulation are the commonly used methods. The model has the potential to help determine how much quantitative and how much qualitative information should be collected. It also helps, for instance, to inform what tools are best suited for analysis of household welfare dynamics.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I provide another lens through which poverty can be understood by postulating a new model for the analysis of poverty with a focus on the micro-level, individual and community descriptors. Thus, models can be useful in order to target certain behavioural outcomes and change specific perceptions. For example, how ignorance and lack of knowledge and information as well as cultural taboos can be addressed if these prove to be a hindrance to removing people from poverty. What the model does is to tap on other social science disciplines such as psychology, health and sociology. The PDM may require psychologists to work in the realm of poverty with a new thrust and new form and content to go to the root causes of poverty and perhaps engender, nurture and develop the required responses.

The following words provide an insightful conclusion:

All people are growing and can grow, given the appropriate combination of support and challenge in the environment. Active involvement, ongoing investment in the person, characterizes the developmental perspective (Hatfield and Hatfield, 1992:164 as cited by Arnold and Breen, 1998:6)).

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CHAPTER SIX

THE MISSING LINK – ASSET-BASED MEASURES OF POVERTY - TOWARDS ASSET-INCOME THRESHOLD AND NETWORTH THRESHOLD³⁰

Chinese proverb: *BETTER teach a man to catch fish than give him fish*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the contributions of this chapter is to lend weight to the current discourse on asset-based measures of poverty and argue in support of Carter and Barrett (2005)³¹ who propose an extension of the Foster-Greer-Thorbecke (FGT) class of poverty measures. This chapter goes beyond asset-threshold and posits assets-income-based and networth measures of poverty applied to the FGT class of poverty measures. A binary classification of assets into tangible³² and intangible is introduced representing what is called in this article the hardware and the software respectively³³. This chapter discusses the former, the hardware. I would like to use this classification to argue that while a lot of poverty studies focus on intangible assets (the software) such as education (literacy), health (longevity, fertility etc), only a few studies have focused on tangible assets (hardware) in the measurement of poverty hence it is given distinct prominence in this thesis. Tangibles include tractors, land, scotch carts, livestock and stocks (grain, seed). I entwine my work with that of Carter and Barrett (2005) with respect to the FGT class of poverty measures to broaden the scope of application of the tools they propose.

³⁰ This article was published in *Loyola Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol XIX, No. 2, Jul-Dec 2005, pp. 245-259

³¹ This paper by Carter and Barrett (2005) is downloadable, see internet 2 in the reference section.

³² Tangible assets are physical and material assets that have physical substance i.e. shape and form, and can be touched for example cash, land, and buildings. Intangibles describes assets that do not have a physical, tangible existence but are usually non-monetary in nature. Examples of intangible assets could include goodwill, brand value or patents, skills, knowledge and creativity etc.

³³ It is quite tempting to categorise these further as concrete and abstract; objective and subjective respectively.

This chapter is divided into five sections. Section 2 provides the background and is followed by a literature review as Section 3 which contains a brief appraisal of FGT extensions as proposed by Carter and Barrett (2005). In Section 4, I propose my own extensions to the FGT class of measures. Section 5 concludes.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Assets have been the missing link in the assessment of poverty. Put bluntly, they have hitherto been ignored in the poverty discourse. However, the role of assets, which is central to the livelihoods approach, is now a well established part of poverty analysis. A lot has been written about income measures of poverty. This chapter advocates asset-based measures as well as a combination of assets and income measures while remaining mindful of the importance of other variables that constitute poverty, such as capabilities, which are not analysed in this chapter. Ultimately, such a question as: Who is poorer, a person without assets and income but with education and freedom; or a person without education and freedom but with assets and income begs an answer. The obvious answer to this seemingly paradoxical question is that a person needs all these artefacts of life to live a life that he/she chooses. In Sen's words 'to choose a life one has reason to value' (1999:75). In the same vein Sen goes on to define a capability as '...the freedom to achieve various lifestyles' (ibid:75). This reflects the importance of both the hardware and software arising from the binary classification of assets mentioned earlier in the measurement of poverty and more importantly, reflecting the multi-faceted/multi-dimensionality of poverty.

Assuming a hard line posture, assets limit and constrain what people can and cannot become. Thus the core thrust here, is the incorporation of assets in the measurement of poverty as income seems to dissociate itself from the assets which create it. Whereas, there are traces of the emergence of some consensus regarding asset-based measures, there still remain traces of contestation on how these measures can be implemented on the ground. It is argued here that it can be done starting with a few assets that reflect a self-defined bundle of assets to make life liveable/bearable. This can then be cascaded to

other categories of assets belonging to the second and subsequent scales see Table 12 below.

Thus, given that the continuum of assets is too wide to mesmerise the keenest of social science researchers, it is here suggested, in an attempt to unpack this broad asset portfolio, that the asset portfolio should rather be disaggregated into scales. The derivation of these scales has been informed by an analysis of developing countries' social landscapes especially African which juxtapose abject poverty and obscene riches within the precincts of the same country. Where there is abject poverty, the simple hoe, the spade, a wheel-barrow, a scotch-cart and a few livestock may be the only deciding factor in separating the poor from the rich in an African setting. A person owning a hoe, spade, wheel barrow, scotch-cart and a few livestock may be considered rich, relatively speaking, in a self-definition of who is poor and who is not. Thus, scaling of assets enables us to capture the asset-holding of the lowest of the low or the poorest of the poor. Thus, it is argued that the threshold must be based on what I shall call intensity scales shown in Table 12 as follows:

Table 12: Scales of assets

1 st scale assets/needs	Rudimentary assets to make life bearable/liveable
2 nd scale assets/ needs	1 st scale assets plus house, car to make life comfortable
3 rd scale assets	2 nd scale assets plus savings etc

In deriving an asset-threshold some assumptions are made. Firstly, that the bundle is adequate. Adequacy here relates to enabling someone to eke out a minimally acceptable way of life/ to just make ends meet. It may include land and other rudimentary tools such as plough, hoes and wheel-barrow, livestock and say a biogas stove. Secondly, the asset-threshold must be context-based or context-sensitive³⁴. This is so because many specific

³⁴ Oscar Altamar as cited in Boltvinik J (see internet 1) argues that 'it is beyond this irreducible core of absolute poverty where conditions of relative deprivation can be found, only definable with regard to the predominant lifestyle in each community' (10). This suggests that local conditions do matter.

assets might be a resource in one culture and a pet (for example) in another. For instance, in Zimbabwe, an African country and Peru, a Latin American country, people eat guinea pig, which would be a pet in the United States of America. While cattle are an asset in many parts of the world, in India they may be considered sacred, perhaps going beyond our definition of an asset. So assets, in other words, must be context dependant but stated in monetary values. Thirdly, assets must be 'long lived' items. This addresses the question, for example, of why a blanket is an asset and not simply a consumable.

Fourthly, assets take different forms. Since assets can be tangible and intangible, it can be argued that the sum of the two categories of assets makes up a standard of living. Put differently, it can be argued that it is the use to which these are put that would permit a standard of living to be achieved. Thus assets need to be combined and used, and there may need to be some transformation required (for example selling cash crops for money which is then used to purchase the things required to achieve a certain standard of living). This is in line with Sen's notion of endowments, entitlements and entitlement exchange³⁵. This means that the terms of trade, the institutions and a range of other issues become important to the transformation of assets into a livelihood or a standard of living.

Fifthly, there is a distributional issue: who should have these assets: men, women, young or the old? And in what measures? It is also possible that different people own different assets, and more importantly, may value the assets that they need differently. Thus women may value land for the garden it provides, while men value cattle for the draught power and the prestige they bring and the youth a scotch cart, for the income it generates. Sixthly, the age of the asset does matter. An item is an asset so long as it has some useful life. Seventhly, all assets carry a value/price just as in the commercial world. To address the issue of identification and aggregation of assets into a threshold, some methodological modalities have to be worked out.

While qualitative data collection methodologies can be used to sort out the issues related to the identification and aggregation of assets, it is here proposed that a consensual

³⁵ See Sen (1981) on entitlements.

approach³⁶ may help in coming up with a context-sensitive asset basket. Thus, the minimum asset basket should represent a snapshot of the asset holding of the units of analysis at a given point in time and space informed by culture, religion, traditions and norms. People should be able to interrogate it, go through it and establish, refine and improve upon it and but must keep it dynamically aligned. Ultimately, the asset bundle must reflect the local landscape and indigenous ways of being, doing³⁷ and [having/owning] (own addition) although defined in monetary terms for it to be able to talk to income.

Income alone in rural Africa is very unhelpful in the measurement of poverty where barter is commonplace, the informal/subsistence sectors are widespread and accounting principles are essentially ignored or merely disregarded. This renders projects measuring poverty using income alone, in such circumstances, largely misdirected as income appears parochial and narrow in outlook as it ignores the missing link – *assets*. Assets, which are usually not measured, perhaps may provide the answers to the underlying causes of the poor performances of these enterprises. Perhaps, relying on the epistemology of income-based measures of poverty leads us to assume that all is well so long as governments of developing countries engage their poor in public works, and provide grants to poor families as income transfer interventions which provide only temporary relief rather than catapult the poor out of their subsistence livelihoods and poverty. Suffice to recall herein the Chinese proverb, *BETTER teach a man to catch fish than give him fish*. On that basis it appears convincing to move to the new asset-based platform which offers a ray of hope if the concern is poverty measurement and alleviation.

³⁶ See Mack and Lansley (1985:42) who define the approach as aiming to identify a minimum acceptable way of life not by reference to the views of “experts”, nor reference to observed patterns of expenditure or observed living standards, but by reference to the views of society as whole. This is, in essence, a consensual approach to defining minimum standards”. Also see Dreze and Sen (1989:10), *Hunger and Public Action*.

³⁷ Being and doing are ascribed to Sen within the context of the capability framework.

Thus income alone should be relegated in the measurement of poverty especially in African rural settings and this chapter lends its support to John Williamson's (2003)³⁸ call for a minimum asset bundle (cited in Carter et al. 2005:31). We also posit a *minimally adequate asset level* (MAAL)/threshold in Chapter Eight as the antithesis of the Minimal Income Question³⁹. While income is easy to use in the measurement of poverty, by the same token, it should not be considered sacrosanct to the extent of relegating critically important dimensions of poverty into obscurity on the poverty lexicon and epistemology. Assets do matter in the study of poverty.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Why are assets important? Sherraden (2001:3) has argued that asset building is a positive route out of poverty.

There are at least three reasons to be more inclusive. One is humanitarian, let us help the poor to do better. A second is social justice; let us distribute the large asset-based benefits to everyone at least equally. And third is simple practicality; if assets are to develop, let us enable people to build assets.

Sherraden and Page-Adams (1995) argue that asset-based approaches to public policy are justified by the following two observations: First, economically: accumulation of assets is essential to address poverty and for the vast majority of low-income households, the pathway out of poverty is not through consumption but through savings and accumulation. Second, attitudinal effects: accumulation of assets leads to important psychological social effects that are not achieved to the same degree by receiving and spending an equivalent amount of regular income.

Savings and asset accumulation thus provide a solid foundational basis upon which the poor can scaffold or extricate themselves from their poverty nests.

Scanlon and Page-Adams (2001) have concluded from an extensive review of research evidence from the USA on the impacts of asset holding, that assets are associated with

³⁸ John Williamson coined the term Washington Consensus

³⁹ The Minimal Income Question (MIQ) was first posited by Goedhart et al. (1977) as cited in Garner and de Vos (1995). MIQ asks for the monetary amounts that people consider to be minimally necessary to make ends meet for their households.

the following psychological and social effects: household economic stability; decreased economic strain on households; educational attainment; decreased marital dissolution; decreased risk of intergenerational poverty transmissions; increased health satisfaction among adults; increased property values; decreased residential mobility; and increased levels of civic participation.

Importantly, assets provide both individual and community-wide benefits. One can infer that it is these positive psychological and social effects that underpin and buttress social cohesion within communities. Given this precept, it is possible to reproduce conditions necessary for social inclusion that allow the ‘poor to do better’ steeped in an asset-focused redistributive project.

According to Naschold (2005:3)⁴⁰ assets are important on the following grounds; first, the economic well-being of a household is dependent on its stock of assets. ‘[Thus] in a dynamic sense, it is the accumulation of assets which over time enables households to earn enough income to move out of poverty’. Second, asset levels fluctuate less from day to day than income and thus are closer to a measure of well-being. Carter and May (2001), (cited in *ibid*,5) argue that assets can be interpreted as measuring the underlying, or structural, well being of a household, whereas income, and to a lesser extent consumption, contain a much larger amount of stochastic variation. These are compelling reasons to experiment with asset-based measures of poverty given their potential to measure the underlying, structural, well-being of a household. According to Naschold (2005:5) the (IFPRI) Pakistan Rural Household Survey and the IFPRI/Addis Ababa University/ University of Oxford Ethiopian Rural Household Survey (ERHS) used assets such as land, agricultural and financial assets in the analysis of household asset dynamics.

There are methodological problematics associated with asset-based measures one of which is the unit of measurement. Lybbert, Barrett, Desta and Coppock (2004) as cited in Carter et al. (2005:25) aggregated heterogeneous livestock into ‘tropical livestock units’ using a weighting system that allowed them to aggregate sheep and goats with larger

⁴⁰ The paper is available on the internet, see internet 5 in the reference section

animals such as cattle and camels. It is here argued that cost or values can be attached to assets without recourse to equivalisation. In the world of business and commerce, assets which include livestock and poultry, are given a value without recourse to equivalisation. Thus, even if the goal is to carry out some international comparisons, purchasing power parities (PPP) can still be helpful in this instance in spite of their well documented shortcomings.

Carter et al. (2005) support the asset-based approach to poverty analysis insofar as it enables 'to distinguish deep-rooted, persistent structural poverty from poverty that passes naturally with time due to systemic growth'. Carter et al. (2005:24) argue that identification of the asset-poverty line makes it possible to distinguish structural from stochastic poverty transitions. Based on this reasoning, Carter et al. (2005) further contend that a natural disaster or other economic shock that destroys assets and thereby knocks a household below the dynamic asset poverty threshold could have permanent effects. The presumption that Carter et al. (2005) make is that the poor necessarily have some asset holdings. However, it can be argued that it may be a case of the poor not having any asset against their name. Some poor people do not even have a hoe, let alone a donkey, to their name. While Carter et al. (2005) also observe that the poor's marginal returns to assets are low, militating against their leap forward even in good times, this only goes to substantiate the fact that the poor's asset base is intrinsically fragile at best and non-existent at worst.

Because of their paucity with regard to assets, it is axiomatic that asset poverty is associated with a paralysis to participate in the society, that is, social exclusion and poverty traps bifurcated in various ways. Naschold (2005:2) notes that poverty traps and long term poverty could be eliminated if every household could be lifted above the minimum welfare threshold and safety nets ensured that they remain there, thus, one-off social expenditure will have benefited households in the current and future periods. Thus, asset redistribution should ordinarily be linked to a theory of justice. Naschold (2005:3) further contends that even in the absence of multiple equilibria and poverty traps, there may well be a case for helping the poor to escape poverty through redistributive policies.

This hammers home the importance of such an asset as land which defines the space in which people can operate.

Carter et al. (2005:27) advocate, in the study of asset-based measures of poverty, using a mixture of methods – qualitative and quantitative methods (triangulation). Triangulation is supported by Adato, Carter and May, *forthcoming*, as cited in Carter et al. (2005:27). Qualitative analysis can be especially valuable in identifying historical causes of structural transitions that predate initial surveys (ibid, 27). It is also important, for instance, in identifying complementarities of assets and their substitutes including their aggregation in different contexts and cultures of communities and nations hence we lend our weight.

4.0 BRIEF APPRAISAL OF CARTER ET AL. (2005) FGT EXTENSIONS

The FGT⁴¹ class of decomposable, single period poverty measures are

$$P\alpha = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N I_i \left(\frac{z - u_i}{z} \right)^\alpha$$

where N is the sample size, z is the scalar-valued poverty line, u is the flow-based measure of welfare (income or expenditures), I is an indicator variable taking value one if $u_i < z$ and zero otherwise, and α is a parameter reflecting the weight placed on the severity of poverty. P_0 (i.e., $\alpha = 0$) yields the headcount poverty ratio – share of a population falling below the poverty line – while P_1 and P_2 yield the poverty gap – the money metric measure of the average financial transfer needed to bring all poor households up to the poverty line – and the squared poverty gap, a more distributionally-sensitive indicator of severe poverty.

⁴¹ Taken from Carter et al (2005:28)

Carter et al. (2005) recast the FGT measure as follows:

$$P_{\alpha} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{s=0}^{\infty} \beta^s I_{it+s} \left(\frac{z - u_{it+s}(A_{it+s}(A_{it+s-1}, \dots, A_{it}))}{z} \right)^{\alpha}$$

Carter et al. (2005:28) argue that this measure integrates the FGT formula with a dynamic framework which measures the discounted stream of expected welfare levels relative to the poverty line using the structural poverty mapping from assets to income or expenditures, $u_t(A_t)$, and the expected asset dynamics, $A_{t+s}(A_{t+s-1}, \dots, A_t)$. They then generate a dynamic generalization of the FGT class of poverty measures, P_{α} as follows: where $\beta \in [0,1]$ represents a discount factor and the other variables are natural extensions in the time domain of the static FGT formula. This dynamic version of the FGT measure would rely on familiar flow-based welfare measures such as income or expenditures, but would exploit the structural mapping between assets and flow welfare measures and underlying asset dynamics within the local economy to distinguish effectively between those who are poor but predictably improving and those who are poor and stuck indefinitely in a low equilibrium trap. For the present period, $s=0$, one could use either realized expenditures or income, u_{it} or predicted structural expenditures or income, $u(A_{it})$ depending on whether or not one believes the true stochastic portion of current income dominates measurement error (Carter et al. 2005).

Carter et al. (2005) also posit a second measure which focuses on the gap between households' current asset holding and those necessary to move them currently and permanently above the asset poverty line. The class of decomposable asset-based poverty measures, P_{α}^A , is described by the following formula:

$$P_{\alpha}^A = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \left[I_i^A \left(\frac{\underline{A} - A_i}{\underline{A}} \right)^{\alpha} + \beta I_i^{A^*} \left(\frac{A^* - \underline{A}}{A^*} \right)^{\alpha} \right]$$

They state that P_{∞}^A measures employ two terms and associated indicator variables to capture each household's distance from the static and dynamic asset poverty lines, respectively. The first indicator variable, $I_i^A = 1$ if $A_i < \underline{A}$ and zero otherwise, reflects whether the household's ex ante asset stock falls below the static asset poverty line. This captures the asset transfers necessary to make a structurally poor household non-poor in the current period. The second indicator, $I_i^{A^*} = 1$ if $\underline{A} < A^*$ and zero otherwise, reflects the possibility that the transfer necessary to make a household structurally non-poor today might not prove sustainable if the prevailing asset dynamics are such that an asset stock of \underline{A} naturally degrades over time, so that the household would predictably be poor again in short order even after augmentation of its initial endowments to \underline{A} . In this case, they argue that the household's future asset poverty is reflected by the discounted distance between \underline{A} and A^* . They assert that this class of dynamic asset poverty measures will count as asset poor those who are presently structurally poor as well as those who are structurally non-poor but who one would expect to become structurally poor in time. They argue that it reflects the strategic policy questions associated with the Washington Consensus of: what asset accumulation is necessary to lift people out of poverty (i.e. what is $\underline{A} - A_i$) and what change in returns on assets is necessary to stimulate endogenous accumulation (i.e. where is A^* and how can we reduce it)?

5.0 MY VIEWS AND COMMENTS

There is scope to utilize these extended formulas to capture a household's distance from the static and dynamic combined asset-income poverty line or networth as I shall show below. Thus, it will be possible to distinguish structural as well stochastic poverty transitions related to both asset and income and networth. Again, in appraising the above formulas, it is evident that the choice of β would largely be arbitrary because it is not clear who determines β and on what basis. The meanings of the product particularly of $u_t(A_i)$ and perhaps $u_{it+s}(A_{it+s}(A_{it+s-1}, \dots, A_{it}))$ are also not clear in the extension by Carter et al. (2005).

6.0 EXTENSION OF FGT MEASURES

In view of the above, I proceed to explore how to customize the FGT measures in addressing my concerns highlighted above.

I thus customise the FGT thus,

$$FGT_{\text{assets}} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^n \lambda_i \left(\frac{A - a_i}{A} \right)^\alpha$$

where N is the sample size, A is **the asset poverty line**, a_i is the value of asset holding of household i, λ is an indicator variable taking value one if $a_i < A$ and zero otherwise, and α is a parameter reflecting the weight placed on the severity of poverty. Po (i.e., $\alpha = 0$) yields the headcount **asset poverty ratio** – share of a population falling below the **asset poverty line** – while P_1 and P_2 yield the **asset poverty gap** – the money metric measure of the average asset bundle transfer needed to bring all poor households up to the **asset poverty line** – and the squared poverty gap, a more distributionally-sensitive indicator of severe asset poverty. The assumption here is that we are, firstly, able to define an asset threshold, secondly, value it and thirdly, come up with an asset poverty line against which a household is considered poor if it falls below that threshold.

$$FGT_{\text{income}} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \lambda_i \left(\frac{I - i_i}{I} \right)^\alpha$$

where N is the sample size, I is the **income poverty line**, a_i is the income of household i, λ is an indicator variable taking value one if $i_i < I$ and zero otherwise, and α is a parameter reflecting the weight placed on the severity of poverty. Po (i.e., $\alpha = 0$) yields the headcount **income poverty ratio** – share of a population falling below **the income poverty line** – while P_1 and P_2 yield the **income poverty gap** – the money metric measure of the average financial transfer needed to bring all poor households up to the

income poverty line – and the squared poverty gap, a more distributionally-sensitive indicator of severe poverty.

Merely adding $:FGT_{income} + FGT_{assets}$ will lead to double counting as some people may be asset poor but income rich and vice versa. Thus it is prudent to combine the value of a household's asset bundle and income to yield a combined threshold based on them. This is of particular interest at this point in this thesis especially with regard to the relationship between assets and income. Would a person's status change under the following circumstances:

- * if only assets are taken into account as a measure of standard of living/poverty?
- * if only income is taken into consideration as a measure of standard of living?
- * if both assets and income are taken into account as a standard of living?

Thus, the FGT extensions given above and those to follow, attempt to address some of these issues. Those that follow are intended to determine whether people are asset poor or income poor or both? Also because most people think that wealth equals assets minus debt that is taken into account by deducing a $FGT_{Networth}$. People may be asset rich and temporarily income poor due to a shock. Thus, these are compulsions underlying our quest for tools that address such cases. This is also related to the debate about inequality. In other words, to what extent do people also relate relative poverty to assets? Hence, the need for an *asset gini coefficient*.

$$FGT_{Asset-Income} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \lambda_i \left(\frac{(A+I) - (a_i + i_i)}{(A+I)} \right)^\alpha$$

where N is the sample size, A+I is the asset-income poverty line, $a_i + i_i$ is the asset-income value of household i, λ is an indicator variable taking value one if $a_i + i_i < A+I$ and zero otherwise, and α is a parameter reflecting the weight placed on the severity of

poverty. P_0 (i.e., $\alpha = 0$) yields the headcount asset-income poverty ratio – share of a population falling below the asset-income poverty line – while P_1 and P_2 yield the asset-income poverty gap – the money metric measure of the average asset-income transfer needed to bring all poor households up to the asset-income poverty line – and the squared poverty gap, a more distributionally-sensitive indicator of severe asset-income poverty. The addition of the value of assets and income of a household yields the household's asset-income value. The asset-income poverty line is a summation of the asset poverty and the income poverty lines. Thus, this measure considers the poor on both scores, i.e. of assets and income, in the determination of their poverty status. These transformations enable us not only to look at the asset threshold from various perspectives, but also open up possibilities of deducing an FGT (networth). Networth can be equated to value of an asset bundle plus income less debt/liabilities.

$$FGT_{\text{Networth}} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \lambda_i \left(\frac{(A+I) - (a_i + i_i - Debt_i)}{(A+I)} \right)^\alpha$$

where N is the sample size, $A+I$ is the **asset-income poverty line**; $a_i + i_i - Debt_i$ is the networth of household i , λ is an indicator variable taking value one if $a_i + i_i - Debt_i < A+I$ and zero otherwise, and α is a parameter reflecting the weight placed on the severity of poverty. P_0 (i.e., $\alpha = 0$) yields the headcount **networth poverty ratio** – share of a population falling below the **asset-income poverty line** – while P_1 and P_2 yield the networth poverty gap – the money metric measure of the average asset-income transfer needed to bring all poor households up to the **asset-income poverty line** – and the squared poverty gap, a more distributionally-sensitive indicator of severe poverty. (In this case $(A + I)$ assumes zero debt. This can find justification on the assumption that debt is not good for the poor).

Transformation of the gini coefficient

Recall the Gini coefficient is:

Gini = $(2 * \text{covariance}(Y, F(Y))) / \text{mean}(Y)$ where Y is income and F(Y) is the cumulative distribution of total household income in the sample (i.e. $F(Y) = f(y_1), \dots, f(y_n)$) where $f(y_i)$ is equal to the rank of y_i divided by the number of observations (n).

In the above Gini formula, mean (Y) can be replaced by **mean asset bundle (A)** and **F(A)** being the cumulative distribution of total value of assets in the sample, $F(A) = f(a_1), \dots, f(a_n)$ to derive an **Asset Gini coefficient**. This will help to identify the skewness in the community with respect to assets and thereby reflect the asset inequality landscape in that community.

7.0. CONCLUSION

Fundamentally, while assets are important, in poverty alleviation, we are still at a loss as to how these should be distributed – What amounts? What to give? What quality? What age of asset? What price to attach to the asset? In what order or sequence shall the assets be distributed? When to give (timing)? What assets to give at what level: individual, household and community? etc

This chapter has provided an extension of the FGT which takes into account assets, income and debt (liabilities) in the measurement of poverty. These are important components which define whether an individual can be defined as solvent or insolvent in the same manner as the commercial world categorises companies. The inability to settle a short-term debt in the commercial world reflects on a firm's solvency. At which point, firms can voluntarily or involuntarily (forced) file for bankruptcy. However, while these commercial principles apply in the commercial world, their application at the individual and household levels would only speak to the quantum of individuals/households in need of rehabilitation out of the poverty trap. Hence, we quantify these into head counts and poverty gaps for alignment with proposed policy thrust and intervention.

The FGT extensions open up the possibilities of calculating geographic asset poverty indices, asset/income poverty indices, networth indices and asset gini coefficients etc.

What should governments transfer, between assets and income? My answer would be assets to extricate the poor from poverty traps. While income is easy to distribute, assets are a different kettle of fish where the issues of what, where, when, how much and in what order etc? what quality? have still to be addressed. Thus, the issues of practicality still haunt the asset-based measures.

The key contribution of this chapter has been the broadening our knowledge with respect to: asset poverty line, asset-income poverty line, asset gini coefficient, asset-income gini coefficient, as well as a networth FGT. These tools have the potential to differentiate the poor on the following basis: assets; income; assets-income; and networth including the observation of inequalities on the basis of: assets, income, and asset-income. These measures are fundamentally predicated on first figuring out two thresholds, that is, an asset threshold or in our parlance, *Minimally Adequate Asset Level (MAAL)* and an income threshold. However, I leave this pathway of FGT and Gini transformations to practical use on the ground.

Suffice to bring forward as areas for further study the following: By how much would an increase in assets lead to an increase in income and vice versa? What policy choices and mix should be pursued to leverage the asset-income combination bearing in mind the initial conditions and environment? Are assets and income sufficient to remove the poor from the poverty trap? If yes, in what combinations? If no, what else? What relationship exists on one hand, between assets and income; and between assets-income and capabilities on the other hand? What are the transmission mechanisms linking income and assets and vice versa and between them and capabilities? Between them and inequality and growth? Between them and vulnerability? In conclusion, the debate between assets and income should continue as the concepts are inextricably linked especially with regard to the measurement of poverty.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

EXPLORING LOCAL CONCEPTIONS OF POVERTY, WEALTH AND WELL-BEING: FIELD EVIDENCE FROM MASHONALAND WEST PROVINCE OF ZIMBABWE⁴²

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Poverty research needs to address the rich-poor conceptual schism because of the differences in meaning that different people attach to these conceptions, especially the rich and the poor. The thesis of this chapter is that there is a rich-poor schism that needs to be investigated from the perspective of the poor in order to be able to do justice to the description and analysis of how people experience poverty. This is nested in the tradition that resonates with the others who make a subjective link to poverty. Yet these conceptions are rarely used to describe the poor by the poor for purposes of understanding their situations and finding entry points for capacitating them to climb out of poverty.

At both the local and global scale, the situation of the poor seems worsening despite the innumerable declarations to eradicate poverty, most notably as enshrined in the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) – which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015 – which forms a blueprint agreed to by all the world’s countries and all the world’s leading development institutions. Milanovic (2003:3) dismisses as simplistic the argument that:

The only thing that a country needs to do is to open its borders, reduce tariff rates, attract foreign capital, and in a few generations if not less, the poor will become rich, the illiterate will learn how to read and write, and inequality will vanish as the poor countries catch up with the rich...leading countries and individuals to a state of economic bliss.

⁴² This article was published in *Africa Development*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 3, 2008, pp.35-54, a Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) publication.

Hochschild (2002) and Anderson, Cavanagh and Lee (2000) note that on a global scale, over the last 30 years the rich countries have grown richer, while the poor countries have become – in both absolute and relative terms – poorer; and on a local scale the rich are getting richer while the poor are becoming more desperate and numerous (in Robeyns, 2004: 1). In order to know how poor people understand and define poverty, the World Bank undertook a global research effort called *Consultations with the Poor* which culminated in the publication of *Can Anyone Hear Us? Voices from 47 Countries, Voices of the Poor* which was used to inform the 2000/01 World Development Report on poverty (Narayan, 2001; Mowafi, n.d). Narayan (2001:39) defines the poor as ‘the true poverty experts’. ‘While poverty is specific to locations, and indeed to social groups, there is a commonality of the human experience of poverty that cuts across countries, from Nigeria to Egypt, from Malawi to Senegal’ (Narayan 2001:40). Understanding these descriptions is an academic challenge. There is need for a sharper understanding of the phenomenon from the poor’s point of view to be able to measure poverty accurately.

Within the context of South Africa, May (1998) contends that the perceptions of the poor themselves are a good way to derive an appropriate conceptualisation of poverty.

In the same vein, Kapungwe (2004:505) argues, in the context of Zambia, that unless people’s perceptions and definitions of poverty and how to deal with it are captured and taken into account, any programmes aimed at combating poverty will yield very little, if any, success. Saunders (2004:4) contends that any definition of poverty should embody

community perceptions (emphasis his) of poverty in some way – as reflected in Henderson’s reference to community attitudes, or in Townsend’s reference to activities, conditions and amenities that are widely approved, or in Mack and Lansley’s reliance on social perceptions.

Desai (1988) also grappled with the questions of defining the poor and asked:

Do we mean by poverty some absolute state of existence at or below subsistence, visible to the naked eye or do we mean a state where some members of a community are relatively worse off or do we mean defining the poor in terms of subjective/ideological/political criteria?

This chapter set off to explore firstly, how the poor of Mashonaland West in Zimbabwe define their situation and create a normative framework for cause-effect relationship and secondly, to contribute to the discourse of defining the poor from the perspective of the poor. If the poor can be defined, in whatever terms, in their own eyes, it becomes possible to measure or count the poor in those terms. According to Silverman (2000:122) it may also be possible 'to treat the respondents' answers as describing some external reality (e.g. facts, events) or internal experience (e.g. feelings, meanings) or it is a way by which people describe their world (Holstein and Gubrium (1995) as cited by Silverman, 2000).

This chapter seeks to explore the local perceptions of poverty and the role and importance of assets in Mashonaland West province in Zimbabwe; establish poverty typologies found in this province; and identify conceptions of assets important to people from different socio-economic profiles for use in the development of a poverty index for African economies.

2.0 DATA AND EMPIRICAL METHODOLOGY

A mix of in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) as well as semi-structured interviews was used in compiling the data as described in Chapter One. To preserve the anonymity of the participants, all names in this paper are fictitious and conjured.

Face to face in-depth and semi-structured interviews which allowed for probing were held with five gate-keepers and 30 villagers from the villages of Zimucha, Chakavanda and Washayanyika of Mhondoro Communal Area of Chegutu Rural District in Mashonaland West in Zimbabwe. Mhondoro communal is situated 40 kilometres from Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe. Villagers in the area practise subsistence farming and their staple food is maize. The data collected is essentially qualitative in nature as it relied primarily on FGDs and interview data.

The people who participated in the focus group discussions were different from those who participated in in-depth and semi-structured interviews, as a way to minimise

response bias. During data analysis, patterns were identified on a thematic basis and thus inductive qualitative analysis was done on the verbatim transcripts of the interviews and the focus group discussion notes. The key themes were: defining a poor person; defining a rich person, typologies of the poor, describing the most essential items; strategies to exit poverty; causes of poverty and coping mechanisms. The data were collected from the 1st of December 2006 to 31st January 2007. The description and discussion in this paper does not represent Zimbabwe but represents a single case study in a poor rural setting of Zimbabwe. Access and consent were granted by the local authority, the chief as well as the participants. Response feedback between the researcher and participants were used to validate the findings.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 DEFINING A POOR PERSON

In defining a poor person, recurring themes were identified. The sub-themes were: lack of farming implements, lack of livestock, scavenging for food, husband and wife enclivity, poor dwellings, and a life of many struggles.

3.1.1 Lack of farming implements

In the group discussions, participants portrayed the poor in terms of possessions such as ploughs and related agricultural implements, however, rudimentary. Since poverty manifests itself in multi-dimensional realities of multiple deprivations, depictions were made of the poor as people who are hamstrung on many fronts. A thirty year old woman described: 'A poor person is someone who has nothing, who is suffering, he cannot plant crops because he does not have the necessary draught power such as cattle with which to plough the land'. This conceptualisation was also reported by others concerned with the absence of resources with which to plough.

3.1.2 Lack of livestock

Participants also defined poverty as not having livestock. The discussants agreed that lack of livestock is a contributor to deepening poverty. Other discussants defined ownership of cattle as ‘mandatory’ and such ownership would make one’s life ‘better’. A 38-year old mother of two explained that a poor person is someone who may not have chickens or goats or anything to keep. This view is supported by Bird and Shepherd (2003:604), who found that:

Severe poverty was associated with significant lower levels and common ownership of a number of critical productive assets – oxen (key for agricultural field operations), scotch cart (key for market and common property resource access) and even wheel-barrows (for transporting goods, and even people, over long distances by those without scotch carts). Land... was frequently left uncultivated because of deficits in terms of physical (oxen, in particular), financial (cash) or social capital to access labour.

Lack of cattle seemed to be a common problem for most of the participants which resulted in the poor not being able to plant and harvest any crops from their fields. It can be inferred that cattle do play a central role in the livelihoods of people in this province who eke out a living on subsistence farming and yet are faced with multiple deprivations that seemingly create a vicious circle.

3.1.3 Scavenging for food

Scavenging for food was often mentioned in the group discussions. It became clear for the discussions that the state of being poor led to desperation. The poor resorted to desperate ways of eking out a living to the extent that scavenging for food in the neighbourhood and subsisting on donations became a part of life for the poor. This is in spite of the fact that the poor do have a desire to farm and ordinarily want also to be self-reliant as was attested to in the discussions and interviews.

3.1.4 Husband and wife enclivity

Women were identified in male-only focus group discussions as important in the community in which they were described as ‘anchors’ of the household who fulfil different roles as providers of familial harmony, labour and insurer of food security. The excerpt below illustrates this point:

You must have a wife – without a wife there is no household. -- Majoni, Male, 49-years old, councillor

This view is supported by another respondent who echoed the same sentiment that a wife is a partner in the productive process who can generate income for use by the family and can play a role of advisor and care-giver to the family. The importance of a stable household in which men and women have clear economic roles was emphasised.

While males-only focus group discussions mentioned that women are important as providers of income and food to the family; women mentioned the need for a man at the household level for headship. It was clear from the discussion that husband and wife became the locus of familial cohesion in times of desperation. For instance, some women expressed their wish for a male to head the household. One female participant prioritised her needs as follows: husband, savings, cattle, scotch cart, cultivator, harrow, wheel barrow, goats and chicken in that order. A striking feature is the mention of the need of a husband by female participants and the mention of the need for a female companion by male participants showing some interdependence and the need for joint livelihoods. In this case, lack of a spouse was associated with vulnerability including vulnerability to theft.

In most group discussions and interviews, the articulation of the need for a spouse can be understood as an indication of a context enabling a new form of practice, if not engendering a new form of resilience. It perhaps is in line with Martha Nussbaum’s capability of affiliation as understood as freedom to engage in various social interactions (2000). Having a spouse can provide the promise of accumulation of wealth as s/he can contribute to household welfare in whatever way. If conceived in social safety-net terms,

it is meant to ward off vulnerability now and into the future. Such a phenomenon can be understood only when put into context such as people's own values, value systems, strategies for coping and survival and the challenges before them, perhaps as new forms of collective activity – the creation of enclaves. Spouses are taken as valuable human assets and thus it is possible to infer that poverty encompasses collectivity and resilience. In line with this notion, Dreze and Sen (1989: 15) define social security as using social means to prevent deprivation and vulnerability.

In articulating capabilities, Dreze and Sen (1989:13) argue for the broadening of attention from command over food to other influences, including command over other commodities with a bearing on nutrition and health. The argument to add wealth is meritable. People need more than just food and other basic commodities. According to White, Leavy and Masters (2003:381) welfare should be understood as reducing ill-being, deprivation or disadvantage, taking whichever term one prefers. Streeten (2000:31) advocates an analysis of self-reliance in culture.

3.1.5 Poor dwellings

In FGDs, dwellings were also mentioned as an indicator of a person's status in the community. The housing type for poor people was described as poor, typically make-shift and empty with no chairs to sit on. This is illustrated by the comment made by one of the participants:

A poor person's dwellings can tell the whole story: His house is constructed using mud and metal tins. Both the roof and the hut are not durable and can collapse in a storm. --Bindu, Female, 32-year-old mother of two.

It was also mentioned in the discussions that some do not even have doors, lack furniture and are virtually empty to the extent that people sit on reed mats. Some poor people were reported to own a single roundavel (round hut) where the whole family sleeps – parents and children. It became clear that here were people whose living conditions do not permit

privacy. This has serious social implications as it impacts negatively on the children, who can slump into anti-social and delinquent behaviours.

3.1.6 A life of many struggles

Reference was made to a life of perpetual struggle for existence by the poor. A struggle to satisfy basic needs such as bread. A struggle to keep the children at school. A struggle to remain mentally sound. Thus, poverty becomes a source of both physical and mental stress. The binary deprivations of material and psychological ill-being, indicative of psychological deprivation, are captured in the following excerpt.

A poor person struggles to make a living. He struggles to get bread, which in most cases he cannot afford. He has no children. Even if he had children, he may still fail to send them to school due to lack of money for school fees. --Morand, Male, 70-years-old, married, father of five children

3.1.7 Other necessities of life

The poor also complain about not having the means with which to kick-start their lives such as credit and children for assistance in day-to-day chores. This is also related to the absence of the means to step on to a ladder of asset accumulation. Relativist conceptions of poverty also emerge as this 56-year-old woman had this to say:

A poor person has no vantage point to talk about. He does not even have a wheelbarrow, sometimes no children to help him. And because of hunger, his suffering seems endless as he continues to languish in poverty. --Nyembesi, Female.

Bird and Shepherd (2003) argue that large family size makes sense in conditions of dependence on subsistence and labour intensive agriculture and the absence of effective social-safety nets. By implication, children were regarded as a source of help and a safety net. If children were regarded in those terms, this has serious implications for the health of the women particularly in the face of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and juxtaposed with the need to reproduce society.

In concluding this section, in most FGDs the major issues raised by the poor concerned their fragile asset bases, the quest for food and the struggle to sustain life on a day to day basis. Because of these multiple deprivations, poverty becomes self-perpetuating, pervasive and omnipresent. In sum,

For a poor person it is difficult to find food to eat on a day to day basis. Once a poor person, such a person usually remains a poor. --John, Male, 55-years-old

The notion of remaining stuck in poverty also suggests that time spent in poverty undermines a person's exit out of poverty.

3.2 DEFINING A RICH PERSON

In contrast to the depictions of paucity on all fronts which characterised the poor, the rich are associated with cattle, availability of agricultural implements, decent housing and good furniture.

A rich person has cattle, ploughing implements such as harrows, scotch cart and cultivator. He has his own chickens and good housing with all the household necessities such as sofas and household utensils 'midziyo yose yemumba'; a kitchen with at least 3-5 pots and a couple of plates on the wall shelf. In the bedroom he must have a bed and wardrobe. --Monica, Female, 48-year-old, widow

Conversely, this also suggests that a poor person does not have these assets. According to the participants in FGDs, good culinary practices and cuisine leading to good health, attractiveness and beauty of their houses are identifiers of the rich in the province.

We see a rich person by the beauty inside his house. We see by the things which he owns, which are attractive and nice such as clothing and a brick house. He tills his land, has cattle and eats well. He has no problems so to speak. --Jessica, Female, aged 67-year-old, widow

Absolute ownership of a house, land and agricultural implements denote riches, if not a high standard of living. The poor make a clear distinction between borrowed and self-

owned implements. To be considered rich in the eyes of the poor, one must own these assets and not merely having usufruct rights to the assets.

Possession of self-owned assets of production means that a person can avoid borrowing. Thus, ownership ensures continuity of production and the attainment of a high livelihood status in the eyes of observers. However, the views expressed here appear to be very modest views of wealth. It may well suggest that, in fact, the people described would be only a little above a poverty line themselves. This is consistent with the findings of May and Norton (1997:107) that the less poor ploughed with tractors, cattle and owned livestock.

It was also mentioned that a rich person can also be seen from the attire he and his children wear and the lifestyles they lead. According to the participants, attire reflects a standard of living and social status. However, attire alone cannot be used to gauge a person's poverty status as some people, especially among the rich, are palpably miserly.

3.3 TYPOLOGIES OF THE POOR

The overall picture that emerges is encapsulated in the following typology – the poor were defined, on one hand as humble, honest but deprived and on the other hand, they were defined as 'scavengers', evil, parasitic, criminal, cheats, dirty and suffering as illustrated in this quote:

The poor work hard, but they are dirty, parasites, matsotsi (thieves) and lazy.
--Munemo, Male, 34-year-old

Their homes were defined in terms of their structural vulnerability. How is it possible to restore the dignity of the poor given such demeaning descriptions? While Woodhouse (2004:18) argues that because poverty is what happens to vulnerable members of society the focus should shift from the 'lack' experienced by the poor, but rather to action targeting social values and behaviour among the non-poor. It can be argued that action should rather focus on the social values and behaviours of both the poor and non-poor;

the poor with respect to their ambitions, expectations and hopes and the latter with respect to their social responsibilities.

In FGDs words such as ‘abundance’, ‘lots of’ and ‘many’ were commonly used to describe what the rich must have. Discussants also emphasised that the quality of these assets also matters in distinguishing who is rich and who is not. A poor woman commented:

A rich person’s kitchen must have utensils in abundance (midziyo yakawanda) such as pots, dishes, tea pots, plates which must be of high quality. In the lounge and dining rooms, there must be high quality sofas, dining tables, display cabinets, room dividers, TVs and a solar energy unit. --Tracy, Female, 38-year-old, two children

The above quote provides some idea of wealth. In most focus group discussions, the participants spoke about the need for asset accumulation as a way to self-sustenance in as much as it is a way to broaden choice and perhaps to ward off vulnerability. They emphasised that one has to have a start somewhere and build upon it to remain productive and be able to overcome the uncertain and unexpected. This suggests some level of awareness of the potential risks in life and the need to manage those risks at the household level.

What resonates in the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews is that there are many uses of livestock. Participants highlighted that the more one had livestock and implements in terms of numbers which are of high quality, the better. This attests to the fact that rich people were able to ‘strategise’ by leveraging their resources to earn more resources. For instance, it was reported in the discussions that they may have between 10-12 cattle deployed differently: some are used as draught power while others are used to collect water from the well/borehole using water bowsers. They have goats, sheep, chicken, turkeys, and even rabbits for meat (personal consumption) and sale. Their granaries are usually fully stocked with food, ‘lots of food’. Because of the availability of these resources, the rich are able to focus solely on farming their fields. In interviews participants claimed that rich people can build boreholes and toilets, which poor people

cannot do. Even enclosures for their livestock must be well built such as the cattle pens, pig sties and chicken runs. According to the discussants, these are the things that separate the rich from the poor. Rich people were also reported to own shops. Thus, given their vantage point, a 56-year-old woman said:

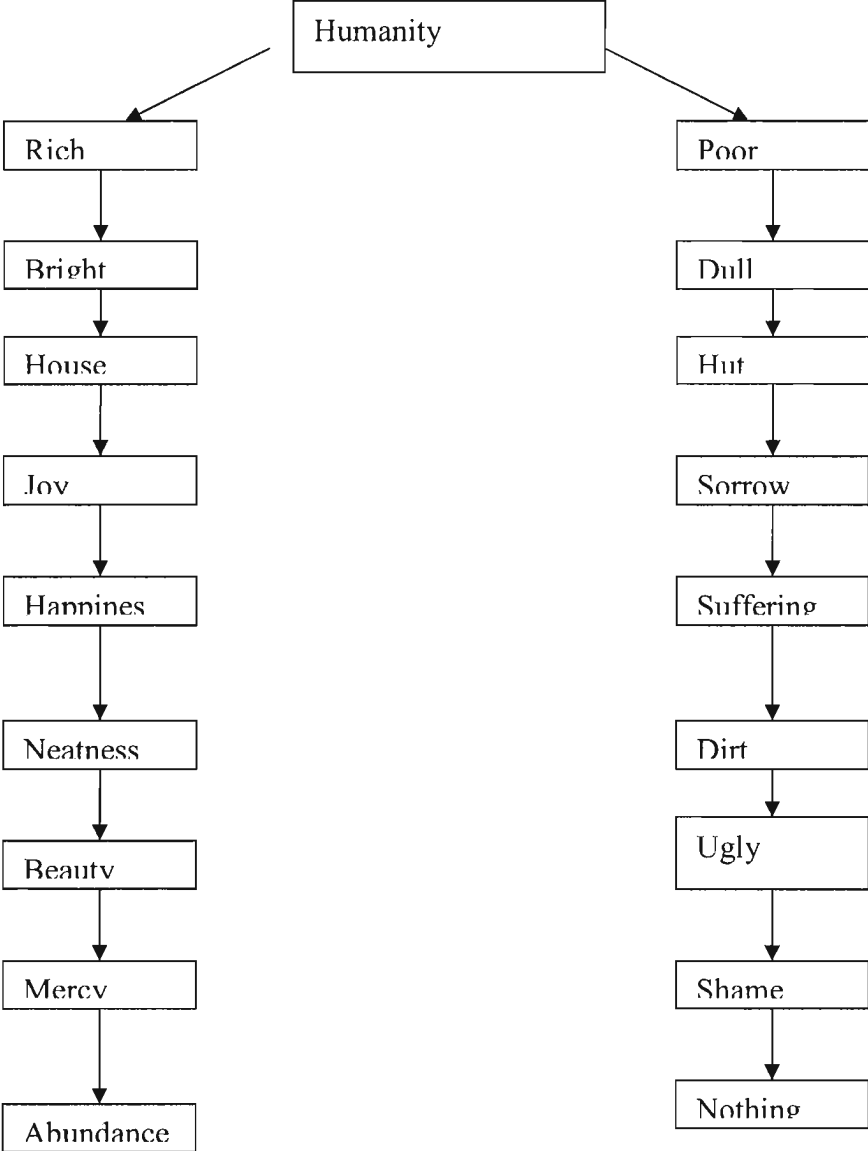
rich people own the shops from where we buy goods and services and therefore all the money goes back to them. Their children may be working while others may be resident abroad. Life in general goes on smoothly for them - at least from the outside. --Nyembesi, Female

A number of people mentioned this caveat which seems to suggest that there is an awareness that things might not be as they appear. Inherent in that quote is the notion of multiple sources of income. The rich own the shops and receive remittances from their children locally and from the diaspora. In the discussions, it seemed the rich were getting richer as others felt that those who do not receive assistance via remittances could not compete for goods and services with those who receive them. It became clear that transfers and remittances do destabilise communities if some receive while others do not.

‘Adequacy’, ‘necessaries’ of life, income generating projects reflect a portrayal of the rich from the point of view of the poor, however subjective. Participants mentioned that rich people enjoy diversified livelihoods characterised by ‘adequate implements for use at household level and a functioning income-generating project which brings in at least two cents or three cents every day.’

On one hand, life styles and standards of clothing were cited as indicators of well-being associated with the rich. On the other, by inference, a dichotomous scale can be drawn as the testimonies were replete with descriptions of bright/dull; house/hut; joy/sorrow; happiness/suffering; neatness/dirt; beauty/ugliness, mercy/shame; abundance/nothing – to characterise the rich and poor respectively. These adjectives are shown below in the form of a tree diagram (Fig. 8).

Figure 8: Tree diagram of rich-poor schism



While the typologies show some degree of polarisation, these definitions tell us that alternative trajectories are possible – middle ground trajectories with allusions to the hopes and ambitions characterised by equity, equality and egalitarianism. Thus, the binary mapping of the rich and poor that emerges from this paper is one part of understanding poverty and its ramifications. Further, perhaps these typologies can help in finding opportunities for prosperity and wealth for all as the needs of the poor appear legitimate for them to achieve what I call livelihood-justice based on the utilitarian perspective to ethics which says that a decision or action should achieve greater good for the majority. Furthermore, typologies guide in transforming mind sets of all stakeholders to transform, reform and craft new hopeful, viable trajectories of the poor that make their lives worth living and to, use Narayan's words, 'catalyze positive social change' (2001:47) if necessary.

3.4 DESCRIBING MOST ESSENTIAL ITEMS

In interviews and FGDs, participants were asked to spell out the items they considered essential to exit poverty. As mentioned earlier cattle came out strongly in all the discussions and across groups. This is illustrated in the following quote:

You need cattle, a scotch cart, cultivators. Cattle are essential. When the time for ploughing is here, and you do not have cattle, you see others working in their fields as you look and gaze. It is not a good and healthy sight. You see their crops 'mumera' coming up and you do not have such. You feel sorry for yourself. It pains me a lot when you do not have cattle. -- Monica, 48 years old, widow

This excerpt is important in that since this person is commenting on what it means to compare one's position as a poor person with that of someone who is not. This brings out the idea of the 'other' – rich.

Participants went to as far as equating ownership of cattle with a 'decent and enjoyable life'. Cattle were found to have multiple uses: cattle provide manure, beef, hides and draught power hence their prominence. Participants argue that it is from ploughing and planting that one gets the food for own consumption and any surplus is then sold on the

market to generate and boost household income. Emphasis on cattle suggests animal husbandry is important for the people of this province. Consistently participants associated capacity to farm with wealth, and conversely incapacity to farm with poverty. Thus, it can be argued that lack of assets such as cattle, as in the case of Mashonaland West, can become a common cause of poverty, without invoking any populism around assets. According to the World Bank (1994:8), in poor rural communities, access to natural resources forms the predominant element of sustaining their day-to-day livelihood and therefore access to land for farming and for grazing animals are important.

In FGDs participants narrated their wish lists which included such items as projects (such as chicken and goat rearing), community gardens, water pumps for irrigation because this area is drought-prone, boreholes to water the gardens, spraying machines for weeding, scotch cart to deliver crops to the market, and electricity⁴³. Discussants considered a lack of these as impediments to development. The idea of communal ownership of assets was raised in focus group discussions. Of importance to the community was a tractor. This is illustrated in the next quote:

We need a tractor. If only we could have a tractor, which would be kept at the councillor's house that would be excellent. You would pay to have your field ploughed/tilled. It will entirely be up to the individual to work their pieces of land productively after they have been tilled [using the tractor]. -- Jeremiah, Male, 55-years-old

There is emphasis on the importance of adequate traction, although this person appears happy with community owned equipment. There is also that implied notional movement from community to individual. In a way saying, we are members of a community but at the same time we are individuals. We must stand on our own and perhaps be self-reliant.

With regard to the number of cattle one must have to be considered rich, most FGDs mentioned the range 10 to 18 head of cattle. Respondents highlighted that cattle have a

⁴³ Projects allow for livelihood diversification (see Ellis, 1998 as cited in Bird and Shepherd (2003). Bird and Shepherd argue that the diversification of the household economy is an 'acknowledged key to poverty reduction'.

variety of uses in a rural setting. For example, cattle provide the milk, beef and skins when slaughtered. Cattle can also be used for ritual purposes and payment of lobola. They are used for ploughing. They can be used as a means of transport, for instance, when transporting grains for milling into mealie-meal. Cattle can be used for transporting harvested produce from the garden to the granary. They can be used to carry firewood. Participants also mentioned that a rich person must hold farming inputs such as fertilisers and chemicals, spare parts for all implements so that production does not stop. The number of assets one owns does matter to the poor.

3.5 STRATEGIES TO EXIT POVERTY

There was a general consensus in the focus group discussion regarding farming as one of the panaceas to poverty alleviation. The group observed that some people within their community have managed to buy tractors, while others had bought cars as a result of farming. It was also highlighted in the discussions that some people have been able to educate their children with proceeds coming from farming. This may well contrast with other areas where people do not see farming as providing an exit from poverty. Such sentiments were captured in the following words:

If only we had enough rains coming as they are doing now, our standard of living would definitely improve, better than in other localities or provinces or even countries. Currently people can't do anything because of the poor rains. If only we had adequate rains, more development would take place in which the improvements in the quality of life of the people would be self evident. Our people are informed and educated. --Munemo, Male, 34-year-old

3.6 CAUSES OF POVERTY

The factors that hinder individuals and families from constructing pathways out of poverty need to be more explicit (Ellis, 2003). To that end, an attempt was made to identify some of the factors in Mashonaland West, which according to the participants, included theft, 'the economy' and drought. These factors are examined in this section.

3.6.1 Theft

One of the major problems that was plaguing the community was theft: theft from fields, theft from granaries as well as cattle rustling. In-depth interviews with participants revealed that theft in general had become a major cause of poverty affecting many households. Elderly people and women-headed households were the major victims and targets of theft. According to the participants, poverty leads to the commission of criminal acts that also included the theft of chickens, goats and even vegetables in the garden.

With regard to theft, it can be surmised given the foregoing, that poverty causes the breakdown of ethics, be they cultural or otherwise. As the stocks dwindle and collapse, people look for alternatives including unethical alternatives. Escalating crime affected especially the elderly and female-headed households. Testimonies abounded in the discussions of destitution arising from theft. In view of the increase in theft, consideration should be given to measures that help the poor build their asset base especially focusing on their needs. Such an argument is premised on the fact that if everyone had what they need, there is no need to steal from one's neighbour. A 55-year-old man commented:

To keep cattle is increasingly becoming difficult because of these criminals who steal cattle at night. You cannot sleep at the cattle kraals at night. People are crying in the community because of theft. -- Jeremiah

People expressed a dire need for income generating projects implying that the characterisation of the poor as hopeless and defeatist is stereotypical even if coming from the poor themselves. Rather, it is imperative to understand why poverty generating circumstances create and recreate themselves among the poor to the extent that certain pockets of the poor may hold such notions of defeatism which may hinder development as they sit in the 'comfort' of their poverty. Linked to this is, is the economy which was mentioned as not helping the cause of the poor.

3.6.2 The 'economy'

The economy⁴⁴ was identified as a cause of poverty. Participants mentioned the ever-increasing prices of basic commodities as causing poverty because the poor could not afford to pay for basic needs. Inflation was mentioned as an 'enemy' of the people. This is captured in the quotation:

The economy of the country is not performing well. Inflation is rising everyday and we remain the victims. The rich are becoming richer and the poor poorer. --Maduve, Female, 38-year-old

The hyper-inflationary environment worked against the poor – measures to restore price stability would be welcome by the poor. A shop-keeper commented:

I change my prices twice or thrice a day. I close my shop when I see people flocking into my shop for a specific item. This signals a big change in prices. They will be wanting to buy from me for re-sell in their shops. We cannot plan in our economy. Food is no longer affordable to many. Johannes, Male, 35-year-old

Ellis (2003) argues that if markets are working well, and trade and exchange are flourishing, then this increases the cash in circulation in rural areas and gives individuals broader opportunities to construct pathways. The trickle up, rather than down, has

⁴⁴ This information on the economy of Zimbabwe is taken from the FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission to Zimbabwe Report (2007). Agriculture is the mainstay of the Zimbabwe economy in which the majority of the country's population is engaged. The country's economy has been declining with the real gross domestic product (GDP) shrinking by about 42 percent between 1998 and 2006. Unemployment and under-employment are rampant. Poverty has become worse in view of the consecutive depressed harvests and a phenomenal rise in the cost of living relative to the Zimbabwe dollar. Successive crop failures, severely constraining people's coping mechanisms, have compounded people's deprivation. In January 2006 the consumer price inflation was measured at 613 percent; by April 2007, it had reached a new record of 3714 percent. Escalating inflation has consequently been reducing purchasing power of incomes almost daily. The monthly salary of a teacher for example is about Z\$ 300 000 (about US\$ 10) when transport cost to work alone can be a significant part of that (Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2007).

prevailed as the rich got richer and the poor poorer. The economy has developed a parasitic character rather than mediating the influences and counterinfluences that work against societal well-being. This further challenges the neo-liberal orthodoxy or any of its variants. Goulet (1979:59-61) also posits that any strategy entails social costs and sacrificed priorities and that relying on 'trickle down' alone is not enough without altering the underlying bases of resource uses. Participants also reported that due to increased unemployment resulting from economic decline, remittances from local sources were dwindling while those from the Diaspora were increasing.

3.6.3 Drought

Nature's vicissitude and unexpected climatic changes can take their toll on the livelihoods of people. The issue of drought resonated in the in-depth interviews as well as in the focus group discussions. Drought was mentioned as one of the major causes of hunger and suffering resulting in a shortage of food. The following excerpts crystallize the sentiments:

Drought is one of the major causes of our predicament at the moment. For instance, even if you had two milk cows, drought affects their yield because of lack of grazing pastures. Where would these cows graze? Consequently, where would the milk come from? It affects our yields from our livestock, our crop yields in the gardens as well as yields from our main plots where we grow our staple crops. You cannot make progress. Anything and everything else you do is affected. We cannot do anything without water. For that reason water is precious to us. Drought is stifling and in many ways causes a lot of undue suffering.

-- Munemo, Male, 34-years-old

3.6.4 Lack of farming inputs

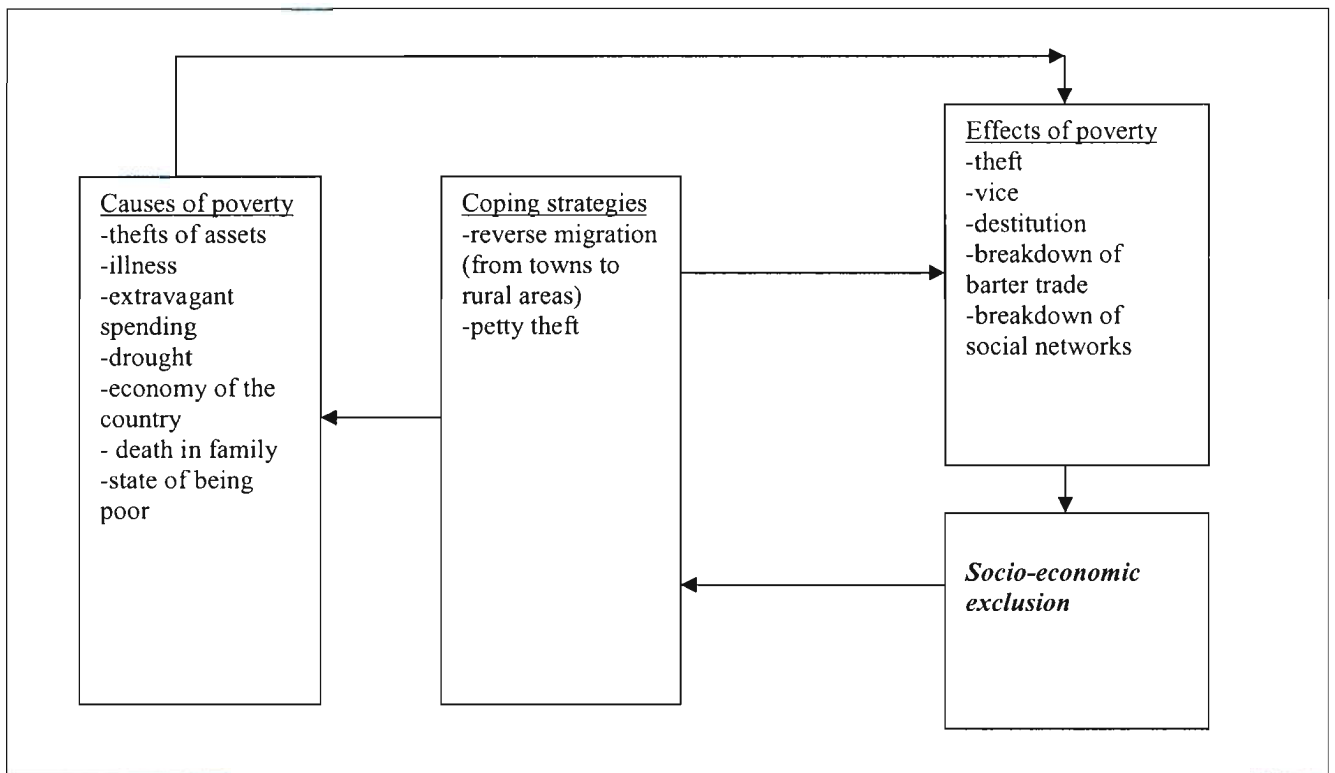
Lack of farming inputs and farming implements have been identified as a cause of poverty. The situation is exacerbated by 'farming failures' emanating from lack of water due to drought and having to pay for hired implements.

In sum, in the focus group discussions, participants cited thefts of assets, illness, extravagant spending, the economy, drought, death in the family, the state of being poor

as causes of poverty. When probed about the effects of poverty, and participants highlighted theft, vice and destitution as the significant effects of poverty. Regarding how people in the community coped with poverty, participants mentioned reverse migration from the towns to the rural areas as well as petty theft.

To illustrate this relationship, I develop a model for the analysis of cause-effect-cause of poverty showing how the various proximate determinants are linked to one another (see Fig 9 below).

Figure 9: Poverty Cause-Effect Empirical Framework



The elaboration of the causes and effects of poverty from the poor's perspective as shown in Fig 9 provides a glimpse of the issues that need to be considered to avoid the social ills associated with being poor and the possibility of crafting options and pathways to exit poverty given such insights.

3.7 COPING MECHANISMS

In this research, participants were of the opinion that in the face of adversity and shocks such as death, drought, hunger and any disaster, NGOs and government have a role to play. However, some felt that because of the different foci of NGOs and government, not all who needed assistance got it. The organisations that were mentioned mostly were Christian Care, Salvation Army and the parastatal Grain Marketing Board which have been providing help during drought periods. A participant had this to say:

We do not expect anything from anyone because we do not receive any assistance whatsoever. NGOs have their customary targets such as widows and orphaned children. --Farai, Male, 45-year-old

Hopelessness, misery, despondency and helplessness characterised some of the responses from the discussants. From the interview data, it appears that the poor become spiritual in the face of adversity. Poverty emboldens people as a male adult had this to say:

Generally we exercise patience. As in the Bible, Job had patience and Samson had the strength, thus we derive our patience and strength from the Bible. --Chatiza, Male, 52-year-old

It can also be argued that this excerpt may well represent resignation to their existing situation and reflects fatalism rather than becoming bold. Nevertheless, religion is important in shaping perceptions of poverty.

Borrowing was also mentioned in the focus group discussion as a means by which people coped during harsh times. Faced with hunger, people resorted to borrowing: borrowing of cash, implements and grain. At the same time, people were afraid of borrowing cash from money lenders who were reportedly ruthless when demanding repayments of the loans.

A widely shared sentiment emerging also from the focus group discussions was that barter trade had collapsed because people had no possessions with which to engage in barter trade. Furthermore, in focus group discussions, the poor testified that the cost of

participating in networks was heavy as this entailed parting with money by way of contributions such as a tithing which many could no longer afford. Thus with deepening poverty, barter and informal networks become increasingly fragile and collapsed as testified in FGDs.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Participants have knowledge of the causes of poverty. The causes of poverty were listed as drought (which decimates livestock and the environment), theft of assets, economy, death in the family and the state of being poor. While drought, theft, death in the family, especially concerning a spouse, appear self-explanatory as their impacts are well documented in literature, the mention of the economy is striking as it is perceived by the poor as working against them – at least in their eyes. From the evidence, the state of being poor invokes trans-generational reproduction of poverty and it became clear that shocks minimise the chances of exiting poverty especially if their impacts are profound and prolonged such as drought. The findings also show that barter trade collapses in poverty, as the poor do not have items with which to engage in barter. It can be posited that barter works better where there is room for asset accumulation and a functioning economy where money and other assets are exchanging hands.

In creating a poverty index, it is imperative to place assets at the core of the index. It became evident from this research that there is a need to properly manage economy-wide shocks such as hyper-inflation given their negative impact on the livelihoods of the poor. Of critical importance, in that same vein, is the dire need to enhance the capacity and capabilities of the poor to accumulate assets as they open up the possibility of reducing their vulnerability. Some affirmative wealth-creating investment aimed at the local level – ‘ideally the village’- have merit in providing a partial solution to the alleviation of poverty as Madavo (2001) and Shao (2001) advocate.

Because of the range and limits of the conceptions of poverty as discussed in this article, it is no wonder that there is not one definition of poverty that has withstood scientific rigour and at the same time reflects the realities of the poor. It is possible to arrive at a

confluence of descriptions notably that poverty is multifaceted and its causes are multi-pronged. It is possible to find solace in the words by Short (1996:1) that there is agreement that all of the definitions capture different pieces of the puzzle while no single measure can yield a complete picture. Hence, the debate rages on.

I agree with the view by May and Norton (1997:115) that qualitative analysis offers unique policy insights which are missed by more conventional methodologies. While some may argue that the poor are not the experts of their situation, they were at least given the opportunity to speak. Thus, the poor have spoken and have been heard and it is safe to aptly conclude with the hopeful words by Achebe et al. (1990:9) that ‘the domain of the future is without boundaries’.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

DEVELOPING AN ASSET THRESHOLD USING THE CONSENSUAL
APPROACH: RESULTS FROM MASHONALAND WEST,
ZIMBABWE⁴⁵

Our needs and enjoyment spring from society; we measure them, therefore, by society and not by the objects of their satisfaction. Because they are of a social nature, they are of a relative nature.⁴⁶

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In unpacking the multidimensionality of poverty, this chapter argues that assets, to a large extent, do matter in the measurement of poverty. According to the International Labour Organisation (1979), poverty lines based on income have the problem of finding the correct equivalent in a situation where wages are often paid in kind, or families supplement their food supply by home-grown produce, or by scavenging. In rural areas barter trade is rife and so is supplementation of food by home-grown produce because many rural people do not have wage employment. Income has widely been used to measure poverty, yet the interventions have, by and large, focused on malnutrition, literacy and health. While this paper may appear to advocate for a one-dimensional perspective on poverty, it argues that any measurement yardstick of poverty must ideally have a corresponding intervention. In a situation where people lack assets, they can be given assets, or where they lack income, they can be given cash. It is from a firm asset base that people, rich or poor, can define and enjoy a particular standard of living.

⁴⁵ This article was submitted to *Journal of International Development* on 6 July 2008: Decision was to accept with minor amendments. The amendments have been effected as I await the final decision. Correspondence is contained in the main appendix.

⁴⁶ Marx, (1946) cited in Mack and Lansley (1985:27).

In line with this perspective, the thrust of this chapter is to determine an asset threshold rather than describe the poor. To that end, it proposes a threshold that depends on assets instead of income while retaining the notion of consensus as expressed by public opinion embedded in the consensual approach. The consensual approach is where public opinion is used via a ballot to determine socially perceived necessities of life⁴⁷. Middleton (2000) notes that consensus can also be reached through discussion, negotiation and eventual agreement. Thus, the lack of certain goods and services which are believed by the majority of the population to be essential falls under consensual measures (ibid). In this paper, the asset poverty line is context-specific and determined by a bundle of natural/physical assets owned by people at a particular place and a particular time wherein monetary values can be extrapolated from those assets to achieve a contextualised satisfactory standard of living.

Using Swedish data, Hallerod (1994) observed that sex, age, household type and region all have some bearing on the pattern of people's preferences particularly affecting their views of necessary consumption. Accordingly, of importance in this paper are questions such as: What is the Minimally Adequate Asset level that a person must have to be considered poor? Is there a measurable threshold of assets that constitutes poverty? How many and what kind of assets do people need so that they are not poor? Does location matter?

⁴⁷ See Mack and Lansley (1985) who are the proponents of the methodology used in this paper.

If there is a measurable threshold of assets that can be used to define poverty, then that threshold can be used to count the poor as those whose assets fall short of the Minimally Adequate Asset Level (MAAL) within a given context and time, *ceteris paribus*. It can be argued that:

- Once a bundle of assets is identified, values can then be attached to those assets to determine the threshold;
- The asset threshold should reflect a threshold at a particular point in time and space;
- Following from the above, the asset threshold should be dynamic over time;
- The asset threshold should exclude the satisfaction of needs that do not depend on access to resources such as affection, identity and freedom; and
- The asset threshold should have capacity for differentiating the poor from non-poor.

To my knowledge this is the first attempt to define a ‘home-grown’ asset threshold using the Consensual Approach – principally using a European method in an African context.

2.0 DATA AND EMPIRICAL METHODOLOGY

Data was collected in Mhondoro communal area which is located in Mashonaland West province in Zimbabwe as discussed in Chapter One.

3.0 FINDINGS

3.1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Data in Table 13 below show the demographic profile of the participants. Seventy-two percent of the participants were women. The age group 60 and above registered the highest proportion of participants with 34 per cent. In terms of marital status, 52 per cent of the participants were married while 42 per cent were widowed. Fifty-four per cent and 42 per cent of the participants had attained primary and secondary education respectively. Forty-four per cent of the participants were housewives and 24 per cent were self-employed.

Table 13: Demographic profile of participants: Mashonaland West Assets Survey

Variable	Category	Frequency
Total number of participants		100
Gender distribution	Male	28
	Female	72
Age distribution*	20-30	16
	31-40	16
	41-50	18
	51-60	16
	60+	34
Marital status	Never married	4
	Married	52
	Divorced	2
	Widowed	42
Highest education	Grade 1-7	54
	Forms 1-6	42
	Vocational training after primary	4
Main economic activity	Regular employment	2
	Casual employment	10
	Self-employed	24
	Housewife/child rearing	44
	Unemployed	18
	Formal education/school/university/college	2

*Minimum age 20; Mean age 51; Maximum age 83; Standard deviation 17.14

3.2 STANDARD OF LIVING SETTING ASSETS

From the poll results, a cohesive view emerged about the importance of cattle, hut/house, land, plough, garden, wheelbarrow, cultivator, harrow, scotch cart and hoe which made

up the top 10 on the list of standard of living setting items in the rural area (See Table 14 below). These top 10 assets, reflect the desire for space from which to operate as exemplified by the presence of the hut/house, garden and land. The remaining items are farming implements. The complementary nature of farming implements is very evident. All the identified items may be considered customary and a reflection of prevailing norms. Furthermore, it seems these items may have become critical for coping.

Table 14: Standard of living assets in rank order

Asset type	% votes
Cattle	96
Hut/house	90
Land	84
Ox-drawn plough	84
Garden	76
Wheelbarrow	76
Ox-drawn cultivator	72
Ox-drawn harrow	72
Scotch cart	72
Hoe	68
Tractor	68
Goat	54
Spade	52
Axe	50
Car/bakkie/pick-up	42
Sewing machine	38
Bed	34
Bicycle	28
Chicken	28
Radio	28
Donkey	26
Sofa	26
Solar panel	22
Telephone/mobile phone	20
Television	18
Satellite dish	16
Motorbike/scooter	16
Stove	14
Computer	10
Bow and arrow	8
Refrigerator	8
Jewellery	2

Most participants seem to place a lot of importance on cattle as succinctly summed up by a 62-year-old widow who said, 'Cattle are life'. This normative statement, illustrates the importance of cattle in the rural areas where farming is the major economic activity. Farm implements are critical in achieving a standard of well-being. This view was aptly summed up by a 45 year old divorced man:

The tools for farming determine what you produce and what you are going to eat. If you do not have the tools for farming, you are as good as dead.

The bottom 10 assets lean towards luxuries for a rural setting and as such are relegated to the lower echelons of the asset list. These items include jewellery, a computer, satellite dish and others which require electricity to operate and which most households in the area did not have. Even if they owned any of these assets such as a television, stove, or refrigerator, such an item would most probably be either battery-powered or solar powered.

4.0 DEFINING AN ASSET THRESHOLD

In determining the asset threshold, according to the Mack and Lansley (1985) approach, all items voted for by a majority of the people constituting 50 per cent of the vote, were considered necessities. Thus, using the Mack and Lansley approach of a 50 per cent cut-off the following assets emerged to make up the asset-threshold (see Table 15 below).

Table 15: Items in the asset-threshold

Cattle	96
Hut/house	90
Land	84
Ox-drawn plough	84
Garden	76
Wheelbarrow	76
Ox-drawn cultivator	72
Ox-drawn harrow	72
Scotch cart	72
Hoe	68
Tractor	68
Goat	54
Spade	52
Axe	50

According to the poll, the bundle of assets in Table 15 above consists of the assets that were supported by the majority of the people. These assets constitute an asset threshold that each and every person in Mashonaland West should have to achieve a satisfactory standard of living. Cattle were considered to be important in the rural area especially as they could be used for: traction for self and hire, for manure, milk, meat, payment of the bride price (*lobola*), and as a form of savings. The wheelbarrow and ox-drawn scotch carts were considered to be important for haulage purposes. The axe made it into the list of necessities because rural people use an axe to cut firewood.

From this list, there is nothing luxurious or meant for pleasure and general comfort. This does not mean that these features are supposed to be denied the poor. The poor should also have pleasure and a certain level of comfort. Alternatively, it can also be argued that they derive their luxury from those items which other people may label as ‘not for luxury’. This may even buttress the idea that ‘a luxury item’ also needs to be contextualised.

There are social expectations and attitudes associated with assets such as a measure of decency and esteem. It seems in the absence of these assets, the qualities of decency and esteem tend to extinguish. Household stability and its renewal also seem to be anchored on asset accumulation. The view below expressed by one of the participants, a 53-year-old married mother illustrates this point.

It is my ambition to farm. But I do not have cattle. I do not have a decent house. I have many children. They do not have decent rooms in which to sleep. My clothing and those of my children are torn. I try my best to make up for these deficiencies through my own effort at farming. We farm a lot but we have not been getting good harvests due to droughts. Our efforts are reduced to naught. We fail to maintain our children in a decent manner. We need livestock and other assets, but we do not have them.

It appears, on one hand, possession of assets brings about independence and self-reliance, on the other, lack of assets leads to dependency on other people. Possession of assets determines whether a person grows crops or not; and importantly in the context of this thesis, whether one is defined as rich or poor based on local norms and practices. For example, in distinguishing between a rich and a poor person, a 36-year-old, married female participant had this to say:

Rich people have built-up homesteads, cattle and adequate implements for farming. During the planting season, they do not rely on others for assistance. For the poor, the cropping season may come and go before they have planted anything in their fields. Most poor people rely on others from whom to borrow farming implements.

4.1 DOES LOCATION MATTER?

According to data in Table 16 there are variations between what rural and urban voters consider to be necessities of life. Although both urban and rural voters voted hut/house and land unanimously as necessities, a house and land received 88 per cent each among urban voters against 90 per cent and 84 per cent for a hut/house and land in the rural area respectively. Similarly, 96 per cent of rural participants voted for cattle against 60 per cent in the urban area. Why did urbanites vote for cattle? Cattle were considered to be important, as mentioned earlier, as a form of savings, for lobola, traditional rites, and for the beef they provide which perhaps the urban dweller also needed. Urbanites may have had the rural areas in mind where they could invest in cattle as a repository of wealth. As one remnant of the colonial legacy people still maintain dual homes – in towns and rural areas – as the town was never really considered home for Africans. Home was in the rural areas for most of the black population where they could find their roots.

Table 16: Comparison of all items votes in rural and urban areas

Asset type	Rural votes (%)	Urban votes (%)
Axe	50	24
Bed	34	74
Bicycle	28	20
Bow and arrow	8	12
Car/bakkie/pick-up	42	60
Cattle	96	60
Chicken	28	36
Computer	10	36
Cultivator	72	-
Donkey	26	12
Garden	76	60
Goat	54	20
Hand-held tools	-	56
Harrow	72	-
Hoe	68	24
House	90	88
Jewellery	2	4
Knitting machine	-	16
Land	84	88
Machinery and equipment	-	36
Mobile Phone	-	64
Money/savings	-	68
Motorbike/scooter	16	4
Plough	84	56
Rabbit	-	20
Radio	28	52
Refrigerator	8	58
Satellite dish	16	44
Scotch cart	72	36
Sewing machine	38	36
Sofa	26	44
Solar panel	22	16
Spade	52	36
Stove	14	94
Telephone	-	64
Telephone/mobile phone	20	-
Television	18	36
Tractor	68	60
Decoder	-	36
Wheelbarrow	76	36

Interestingly for urbanites, the stove was voted as a top necessity by 94 per cent of the urban voters whereas cattle topped the list of rural voters receiving a vote of 96 per cent. Money/savings were important to urban voters who gave these assets 68 per cent of their votes. In contrast, participants in the rural area never mentioned savings as a form of asset let alone as a necessity. This finding reflects the importance of these items in relation to the environment in which these people live. The differences also reflect the

level of sophistication of their lifestyles on the basis of a rural-urban divide. In sum, on the basis of lifestyle, location does matter.

5.0 DRAWING THE ASSET POVERTY LINE

Using information from a mixed FGD and the list identified in Table 15, which uses the Mack and Lansley 50 per cent cut-off, the bundle of assets required for a person to survive in rural Mashonaland West was established, as well as its cost. The assets shown in Table 16 below exclude the house and tractor which were not considered priorities by the people. The FGD participants also decided to exclude land and garden because the Government of Zimbabwe was distributing these assets under the land reform programme.

Table 17: Asset-threshold using Mack and Lansley 50 per cent cut-off

Asset	No. required	Unit Value (Z\$ million)	Total cost (Z\$ million)
Cattle	4	8	32
Ox-drawn plough	1	3	3
Wheelbarrow	1	4	4
Ox-drawn cultivator	1	3	3
Ox-drawn harrow	1	3	3
Scotch cart	1	10	10
Hoe	4	0.3	1.2
Goat	4	3	12
Spade	1	0.3	0.3
Axe	4	0.3	0.3
Total value			68.8

At the time, December 2005/January 2006, the exchange rate was Z\$10,000 = South African R1; US\$1 = South African R 6.

The data in Table 17 indicate that for a household to escape poverty, it must have four cattle, four hoes, four goats and four axes as well as a plough, a wheelbarrow, a cultivator, a harrow, a scotch cart and a spade. These make up the standard of living setting assets in this province with a total value of Z\$68.8million or US\$1,150. This also constitutes the asset poverty line. Sen (1992) argues that the identification of poverty is

an acknowledgement of deprivation which requires deciding who are truly deprived as judged by the society in question.

5.1 DEFINING WHO IS POOR AND WHO IS NOT

Mack and Lansley (1985:178) argue that:

We will, therefore, take all those who cannot afford three or more necessities as an indication of the numbers in poverty ...on the basis that the effect of a lack of one or two necessities is in the main relatively marginal, simply because people's lives are inevitably touched in at most one or two areas. By contrast, those who lack three or more necessities are generally cutting back in a range of ways...that affected a range of areas of their life and not just one.

If one takes a cue from Mack and Lansley (1985), in establishing who is poor and who is not, it is possible to use a three asset cut-off as the measure which is of interest here. Thus, a person who lacks three or more of the standard of living setting assets would be considered poor. For the people of Mashonaland West, those households without three or more of the assets in the bundle of necessities in their natural/physical form or stated in monetary terms as shown in Table 16 should be considered asset poor. It is not the objective of this chapter to count the poor. The objective is to establish an asset threshold using the Consensual Approach through the eyes and experiences of the people of Mashonaland West in a self-definition of poverty which uses local norms as the measure of well-being.

This chapter has been able to firstly, define an asset threshold – the Minimally Adequate Asset Level (MAAL); secondly, value it and thirdly, draw an asset poverty line against which a household can be considered poor if it falls below it. The MAAL can be used to

calculate some customised FGT measures and a Gini coefficient based on assets (Mtapuri, 2005). If hitherto the Gini coefficient was useful for describing income inequality, it can also now be used for measuring inequalities of property such as land and material assets of small farmers as this paper advocates.

6.0 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The primary purpose of this chapter is to fill a gap in the measurement of poverty by defining a context-sensitive, fixed bundle of assets – the *minimally adequate asset level*. This chapter has managed to transform the asset threshold from a theoretical plane to a practical platform. The MAAL is the asset threshold against which a person or household can be considered as poor or not poor. The MAAL reflects the people's conception of necessary assets to achieve a socially acceptable standard of living based on consensus. Saunders (2004:3) calls this 'community credibility' in that the poverty measure obtained is derived from 'the actual living conditions experienced by the poor, whether this is derived from large scale survey data, or from smaller scale in-depth studies of poor people'. The next step would then be to map and count the poor on the basis of their asset holdings.

This asset-threshold is important for policy because it proposes a shift in mindset from merely providing cash and food grants to interventions on the less ordained path of asset distribution. It is now possible to generalise, not with regard to populations or different universes, but about theoretical and practical propositions of distributing what people deem fit for the achievement of a contextually-defined standard of living: plough for

plough in Mashonaland West. The identification and qualification modalities of who is poor and who is not, based on their asset portfolios, have to be worked out because there are costs related to the distribution of these assets. Indeed, there is an asset threshold below which people can fail to function within the confines of the norms and traditions of the communities in which they live. It can be argued, both on moral and economic grounds, that a poor asset base is a key precursor to poverty.

For those with a keen interest in the human rights discourse, the MAAL perhaps establishes some right or entitlement springing from a cohesive view of what the majority deems to be necessities of life⁴⁸. Herrera (2005:28) posits the following hypothesis: ‘...time spent in [asset] poverty in the past increases the probability of remaining [asset] poor in the future periods’. Thus, the impulsion to distribute assets springs from the fact that because assets are ‘long-lived’; they become useful in current and future periods. The MAAL also opens up possibilities for an Asset-based Consensual Poverty Index. It is hoped that the people of Mashonaland West will find meaning in their bundle of standard of living setting assets – the MAAL.

⁴⁸ The communitarian rights approach here seems to have a potential collision with the individualistic approach.

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CHAPTER NINE

THE ASSET-BY-ASSET POVERTY INDEX⁴⁹

Observations about the poor are as old as history. Within the Bible, the Old Testament places numerous injunctions upon the Jews to make provision for those in greatest need. (Donnison, 1975 cited in Holman, 1978:2)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to develop an alternative approach to measuring household poverty. Due to the problems of conventional methods (as in the UNDP's Human Poverty Index) and the difference between income poverty and consensual poverty, we found it prudent to explore new territory for a home-grown poverty index that is simple to understand and use, palatable to lay-people as well as technocrats, politicians and development practitioners.

The exclusive use of the monetary approach in the measurement of poverty, which had gained common currency internationally, has not been useful for practical reasons in poor rural communities. The Poverty Assessment Study Survey (PASS I) undertaken by the Government of Zimbabwe in 1995 used the monetary approach. This was improved further in PASS II, through triangulation and the expansion of the definition of poverty as demonstrated in the quote:

The main objective of PASS II is to measure "human poverty" in Zimbabwe. The concept of human poverty is defined as deprivation of different social and economic entitlements (deprivation in human capabilities) including income, health, education, access to safe water and sanitation, access to food, shelter, security, freedom of choice, and participation in decision-making. This concept is broader than the concept of "income poverty", which primarily refers to lack of income to meet basic needs (Government of Zimbabwe, 2003).

⁴⁹ I intend to publish this article in the *Journal of Asian and African Studies*.

Laderchi et al. (2003:245) state that the monetary approach and the social exclusion approach were initially devised for developed countries. They assert that in each there are problems in translating their application to developing countries. For instance, in the monetary approach, they argue that this involves ‘heroic imputations’ of values for subsistence production; and in social exclusion, they observe substantial differences in societal norms leading to major differences in the defining characteristics of social exclusion. They also rightly contend that the capabilities approach and participatory methods were first devised with developing countries in mind. It is clear again that the interpretation of the approaches will differ between societies with radically different characteristics – this is not just a matter of developed versus developing countries, but also other major societal differences (e.g. between socialist and capitalist societies) (ibid: 245). I agree with them that, to some extent, such methods are context-specific and may need to be re-interpreted for particular societies for operationalisation, which can make comparisons across contexts problematic. The index I posit here is, like these others, context-specific. This view is supported by Atkinson (1987:931) who asserts that ‘the notion of a fixed absolute poverty standard, applicable to all societies and at all times, is a *chimera*’.

Organisation of this chapter

Section 1 above introduces the need for fresh approaches to poverty measurement. In Section 2, I examine literature on the subject. Section 3 presents an *asset-by-asset point index* based on survey data and Section 4 concludes.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 POVERTY INDICES

Ravallion (1996) notes that while economists have relied heavily on household incomes and expenditure in their research and policy advice related to poverty and inequality, there are conceptual and empirical problems that confound these measures which does not mean that they should be ignored. Rather, it indicates that there is need for

supplementary measures to capture the missing items. This provides the necessary impetus to researchers to look for new measures in poverty studies.

Bird and Shepherd (2003) devised a 'recovery index' in which peoples' perceptions of change were used on a number of relevant dimensions over five years to create the index. The recovery index measured 'the degree of perceived improvement or decline over 1993-1998'. It was labelled a 'recovery' index as it sought to measure households' bounce back after widespread impoverishment associated with the 1991 drought in Zimbabwe. The index was calculated based on responses to eight questions about change in food-security related variables, positive answers to which would broadly indicate a degree of recovery. A positive response on each question scored 1, no change 0, and a negative response -1. The scores were often aggregated (but not weighted) for each household. The minimum possible was -8 and the maximum +8. The indicators were: access to farmland; total crop output; household food security; livestock holdings; draught power availability; children's education affordability and health services affordability. Bird and Shepherd (2003) worked with the supposition that the respondents were being asked to comment on improvement/decline/standstill with respect to their household. It is from upon this recovery index and those by Kundu and Smith; Sen, Chaubey, Thon, Takayama, Kakwani; Clark, Hemming and Ulph; Beckerman and Fishlow (cited in Chaubey, 1995:125) that this paper builds.

Laderchi et al. (2003:244) argue that clarification of how poverty is defined is important as different definitions imply the use of different indicators for measurement as this may lead to the identification of different individuals and groups as being poor and this in turn may require different policies. It may also require different analytic tools and interventions.

Laderchi et al. (2003:244) ask:

Should we expect definitions and measurement indicators applied in one type of society to be transferable to other societies without serious modifications, or even at all?

I argue that where a measure applies let it continue in use, especially if typicality can be established. But social scientists should not shy away from modifying and innovating where necessary and appropriate. This will make the indices relevant, valid, reliable and most of all useable in theory and practice.

2.2 THE POVERTY LINE

There are various polemics regarding the measurement of poverty and poverty lines as there are cracks on ideological grounds between politicians and academics regarding the choice of 'appropriate' methodologies to use in practice. Regarding the rift between direct and indirect measures of poverty, Hallerod (1994:30) contends that both methods 'add something to the picture' despite, at times, giving different results. Laderchi et al. (2003:245) state that, at a theoretical level, the choice of a definition of poverty relies on the crucial assumption that there is some form of discontinuity between the poor and the non-poor that can be reflected in a poverty line. Such a break can pertain to the behaviour of the poor, or some salient feature that identifies the poor and that either moral or political consideration suggests should be addressed. They note, for example, that on political or moral grounds the poverty line is fixed at a level at which people can realise a full or decent life e.g rights-based approaches to poverty and capabilities (see Nussbaum, 2000). And on the basis of expenditure requirements to ensure minimum nutrition – the monetary approach, and they observe other 'natural' breaks in:

- evidence on importance of social networks for provision of informal insurance and support mechanisms;
- participatory research where the 'break' is at levels of resources below which people are considered unworthy of community support as they would not be able to reciprocate their obligations if needed.

Laderchi et al. (2003:245) write about two extremes of poverty measures. Firstly, the poverty line is defined with reference to some summary measure of the overall distribution, e.g the EU states the line is set at 60 per cent of the median of equivalised

income (ibid: 245). Secondly, the poverty-line is set in terms of minimum requirements in the dimension of interest identified in absolute terms e.g. on the basis of some needs of the individual deemed as essential for survival.

We still have to grapple with the issue of how many poverty lines are possible. Chaubey (1995:4) states that there could be many poverty-lines even on a single criterion. For example, for states or communities, by person or household (within the concept of household, for a single-person household, couple household, a household with one child, two children etc). However, Hallerod (1994) rightly asserts that an asset poverty-line is just an indicator of poverty rather than an absolute dividing line between poor and non-poor.

3.0 ASSET-BY-ASSET POINT INDEX

In this section I posit an *asset-by-asset point index*. I so named it because it has to be worked out for each and every asset in the basket as well as for each household under study. In doing so, I take into account what a person currently possesses. For any asset that a household has in its possession, I award a merit or point. (I shall proceed by calling it a point at all times in this chapter). Consequently, each point is equal to 1. In each asset class, for a household to earn a 1, it should possess the minimally required number of assets, short of which a 0 is also awarded. If the household does not have any asset in a given class, a 0 is automatically awarded. As stated earlier, for a household to be considered not-poor, it must have four head of cattle, four hoes, four goats and four axes as well as a plough, a wheelbarrow, a cultivator, a harrow, a scotch cart and a spade. Anything short of this basket is considered poor⁵⁰. To illustrate how the index is constructed and how it works I shall introduce three hypothetical households and the assets they possess. These are shown in Table 18 below.

⁵⁰ This also means that if you have more than the required minimum in a given asset class, you earn a demerit. It means also a person X with 10 hoes is no richer than a person Y with say four hoes. Adding more hoes does not contribute to any further output due to the law of diminishing returns because more hoes become under-utilised.

First, I set out here the decision rules. My scorecard assumes value as only zero value or a positive integer, with a maximum value limited to the size of the basket. If the basket has 10 items, as in this case, the maximum points that a household can earn is 10. Thus, the index assumes the value of 1 when a household's possession (denoted by a_{ij}) of cattle, hoe, goat and axe is greater or equal to 4, that is, ($a_{ij} \geq 4$); and zero when a_{ij} is less than 4, that is, ($a_{ij} < 4$). For example, if a household has 8 cattle, it earns 1 point because it has more than the required limit of 4. In contrast, if a household has 3 cattle instead of 4 as the required minimal limit, a zero is assigned because it has less than the required minimum – this would apply for possessing 3, 2, 1 and 0 cattle. The index assumes the values of 0 when a_{ij} is less 1, that is, ($a_{ij} < 1$) for a plough, wheelbarrow, cultivator, harrow, scotch cart and spade and 1 otherwise because a household has to have one of each to satisfy the minimum standard.

A_j denotes the minimum standard requirement of assets in a given class to complement the achievement of a satisfactory standard of living.

Table 18: Hypothetical imputation of asset-by-asset point index

Do you have?	How many? (At least)	HH1		HH2		HH3	
	A_j minimum standard	a_{ij}	Index value	A_2	Index value	a_3	Index value
Cattle	4	0	0	3	0	5	1
Hoe	4	0	0	4	1	6	1
Goat	4	0	0	5	1	8	1
Axe	4	0	0	1	0	10	1
Plough	1	0	0	0	0	5	1
Wheelbarrow	1	0	0	0	0	4	1
Cultivator	1	0	0	1	1	3	1
Harrow	1	0	0	1	1	10	1
Scotch cart	1	0	0	1	1	20	1
Spade	1	0	0	0	0	10	1
Total	-	-	0	-	5	-	10

It can be observed from the data in Table 18 that household 1 does not have the assets required to meet the minimum standards hence its total index value is 0 and it earned zeros across all asset classes. As for household 2, it has equal or more than the required minimum assets in 5 of the items and hence earns 5 points. It has three cattle instead of four hence earned 0, it has four hoes against four required and earns 1 point. It has five goats which are more than the required minimum of four and earns 1 point. It has one axe instead of four and earns 0 point and so forth. Household 3 has more than the required minimum number of assets in the basket and therefore earns 1 point for each asset class to a maximum of 10. As a result, it can be observed that the index value will range between 0 and 10. (0 represents no assets at all while 10 represents possession of the

entire bundle of assets). Thus, zero is the minimum value that this index can assume showing that a household does not have any of those assets; and 10 is the maximum value that it can assume because in this basket there are only 10 items. It can be surmised that a household with less than 10 items is falling short of the required minimum standard to achieve a satisfactory standard of living. In other words, the range from 0 to 10 would speak to the level of paucity of the household if not severity of poverty: the closer to 0 the poorer the household is. In contrast, if a household earns points that are closer to 10 then that household is closer to attaining the required minimum standards.

The headcount ratio, which is a simple aggregation of all households with less than 10 points, would be constituted by those households falling short in one or more necessities and therefore considered to be poor. It follows that any household which earns 10 points, which is the maximum, would be considered non-poor. It is possible to note that household 1 is worse off than household 2, while household 2 is worse off than household 3. By computing this index, it will also be possible to calculate average and median scores for specific localities where the basket is relevant for purposes of comparison.

To elaborate on how the method is user-friendly, I further suggest that the awards of points be articulated to the less literate people by giving them a stick when they have the full package in an asset class and a stone when they lack one or more of the units to show that they are asset-poor in relation to that asset type. The two stones and eight sticks mean that the household is asset-poor in 2 out of a bundle of 10 assets. If a household has 7 stones and 3 sticks, this means that it is 'asset-poor' in 7 out of an asset bundle of 10 assets. The technocrat can also work out his index from a range of 0 to 1. Possession of two stones out of 10 means 0.2; and 7 stones out of a total of 10 assets gives 0.7. Each household's index would be worked out as $1 - \beta$, where β is the proportion obtained above which represents possession of stones. In the case of the household where $\beta = 0.2$, the index obtained would be as $(1 - \beta) = (1 - 0.2) = 0.8$ and in the case where $\beta = 0.7$ the index value is $1 - 0.7 = 0.3$. Thus in these examples, the closer a household's index is to 0, the poorer it is. In the example given, the second household is poorer than the first.

Furthermore, Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) methods such as wealth-ranking can be used to identify households that are poor and those that are non-poor. Stones and sticks can be used to identify households in relation to their possession of the asset threshold. Drawings on the ground may also be used to map a household's possessions to define who is poor on the basis of their possession of the assets of interest.

The *asset-by-asset point index* posited here represents a simple methodology that uses inputs of well-being rather than outputs to count the poor on a point basis, household by household. It focuses on assets which are a significant aspect of well-being in whose absence households may fall into deprivation. It yields quick results and is easy to communicate to policy-makers and ordinary users. However, in urban areas a different set of indicators needs to be developed. This method is good for the production of localised indicators as it allows disaggregation of data by rural/urban divide and even at the village/household level. It is better than the international poverty line of a US\$1 a day which is not based on a common basket. It can facilitate area-based interventions. It is an asset-based measure which will help to identify the poor and the type of help they need, and thus, can be used as a monitoring tool at the household and community levels. It does not employ and deploy either weights or equivalence scales.

The *asset-by-asset index* has the following weaknesses: it does not allow for the aggregation of the different assets which is only possible with the introduction of values to cost the basket or its shortfalls. The quality of the assets that a household may possess may be questionable – one may have four hoes that satisfy the required minimum standard but which are almost broken down, blunt and not useable in the medium and long terms. Comparison between regions is not readily possible because the basket is context-specific. The index ignores other qualitative dimensions of human life such as freedom, capabilities, interpersonal relations as well as environmental issues.

Furthermore, the index is indifferent to the extent of poverty among the poor as a household with 3 cattle earns a 0 (and is considered 'cattle poor') as would a household

with no cattle at all. It only provides for a headcount of who is poor and who is not on the basis of the satisfaction of the required minimum standards.

To address the latter, I posit the following follow-up index – *the asset-by-asset gap index* which draws to a large extent on the Foster-Greer-Thorbecke class of indices and other indices mentioned earlier. It is called asset-by-asset gap index because it enables the identification of the asset gap on a household-by-household-basis.

The *asset-by-asset gap index* can be used to obtain three outcomes:

- Total asset shortfall for a given community or village;
- Average asset gap; and
- Asset gap as a proportion of the asset poverty-line.

i) **Total asset shortfall**

Thus to obtain the total asset shortfall for all households, it can be obtained using the following formula:

$$asset\text{-by-asset index}_{asset\ type} = \sum_j^k \sum_{i=1}^q \lambda_i (A_j - a_{ij})$$

where j is asset type identifier, k is total number of assets, q is the number of poor, A_j is the asset poverty-line for a given asset, a_{ij} is the asset holding of household i of asset type j, λ is an indicator variable taking value one if $a_{ij} < A$ and zero otherwise. Suppose you have three households with differing asset holdings. Table 19 shows data pertaining to these three hypothetical households which shall be used to compute the total asset shortfall.

Table 19: Hypothetical imputation of asset-by-asset gap index

Do you have?	How many ? (At least)	HH1			HH2			HH3		
		a_1	Index value	Short fall	a_2	Index value	Short Fall	a_3	Index value	Short fall
Cattle	4	0	0	4	2	0	2	5	1	0
Hoe	4	0	0	4	6	1	n/a	6	1	0
Goat	4	0	0	4	0	0	4	8	1	0
Axe	4	0	0	4	2	0	2	10	1	0
Plough	1	0	0	1	2	1	n/a	5	1	0
Wheelbarrow	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	4	1	0
Cultivator	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	3	1	0
Harrow	1	0	0	1	6	1	n/a	10	1	0
Scotch cart	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	20	1	0
Spade	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	10	1	0
Total	-	-	0	-	-	3	-	-	10	-

n/a not-applicable denotes that the household has more than the required minimum number of units and therefore there is no shortfall. A zero would also apply as was done for household 3.

Using data in Table 19 and cattle as an example, I shall demonstrate how the *asset-by-asset shortfall index* can be obtained.

Table 20: Shortfall computations

	A_j	a_{ij}	$\sum_{i=1}^q \lambda_i (A_j - a_{ij})$
Household 1	4	0	4
Household 2	4	2	2
Household 3	4	5	0
Total	12	7	6

$$\text{asset-by-asset index}_{\text{cattle shortfall}} = \sum_j^k \sum_{i=1}^q \lambda_i (A_j - a_{ij}) = (4 - 0) + (4 - 2) = 6$$

In this village or locality of three households, there is a shortfall of six cattle. Values can also be attached to these shortfalls to measure the quantum assistance to be provided to the needy households. In that case, the formula takes the form:

$$\text{asset-by-asset index}_{\text{cattle shortfall value}} = \sum_j^k \sum_{i=1}^q \lambda_i (A_j - a_{ij}) * P$$

Where: P is the market or any other price.

Using values in Chapter Eight, where each head of cattle was worth Z\$8 million: The value of the shortfall for the two households in this locality is: 6 cattle * Z\$8 million = Z\$48 million.

ii) Average asset gap

The *asset-by-asset index* can be used to obtain the average asset gap. The average asset shortfall expresses how far the poor are from the specific asset poverty line, that is, the number of units of an asset, under perfect targeting, that needs to be transferred to the poor to close the specific asset poverty gap. The formula is:

$$\text{asset-by-asset index}_{\text{asset type}} = \frac{1}{q} \sum_j^k \sum_{i=1}^q \lambda_i (A_j - a_{ij})$$

where j is asset type identifier, k is total number of assets, q is the number of poor, A_j is the asset poverty line for a given asset, a_{ij} is the asset holding of household i of asset type j , λ is an indicator variable taking value one if $a_{ij} < A$ and zero otherwise. It can be noted that this index is indifferent to the asset distribution among the poor.

Using the same data in Table 20, the average asset shortfall, which is the number of units of cattle that need to be transferred to close the cattle poverty gap is obtained as follows:

$$\text{asset-by-asset index}_{\text{cattle}} = \frac{1}{q} \sum_j^k \sum_{i=1}^q \lambda_i (A_j - a_{ij}) = \frac{(4 - 0) + (4 - 2)}{2} = 6/2 = 3$$

There would be need to be a transfer of three head of cattle to each household to close the cattle poverty gap.

It can also be obtained thus:

$$A_j - \mu_q$$

Where

μ_q is the average of a_{ij} that is the mean asset-holding of a specific class of asset among the poor.

$$\mu_q = \frac{\sum a_{ij}}{q} = \frac{0+2}{2} = \frac{2}{2} = 1$$

Thus, $A_j - \mu_q = 4 - 1 = 3$ cattle

Therefore on average three head of cattle have to be distributed to close the cattle gap.

iii) The average asset gap as a proportion of the asset poverty line

The average asset gap can also be expressed as a proportion of the asset poverty line thus,

$$\text{asset-by-asset index}_{\text{asset type}} = \frac{1}{q} \sum_j^k \sum_{i=1}^q \lambda_i \left(\frac{A_j - a_{ij}}{A_j} \right) = 1 - \frac{\mu_q}{A}$$

where j is asset type identifier, k is total number of assets, q is the number of poor, A_j is the asset poverty line for a given asset, a_{ij} is the asset holding of household i of asset type j , λ is an indicator variable taking value one if $a_{ij} < A$ and zero otherwise.

Using data in Table 20, the proportion is obtained thus:

$$\text{asset-by-asset index}_{\text{cattle}} = \frac{1}{q} \sum_j^k \sum_{i=1}^q \lambda_i \left(\frac{A_j - a_{ij}}{A_j} \right) = \frac{(4 - 0) + (4 - 2)}{4} = 6/4 = 1.5/2 = 0.75$$

Thus 75% of $A_j = 0.75 * 4 = 3$ cattle

Recall $\mu_{q=1}$ and $A_j = 4$ from above.

Using the formula: $1 - \frac{\mu_q}{A_j} = 1 - \frac{1}{4} = 1 - 0.25 = 0.75$

The indices presented here are justified by a relative deprivation concept of asset poverty. With regard to axioms, which are statements that cannot be proved (Chaubey, 1995:58), the transfer axiom that an asset transfer from one poor household to another will not affect the asset-by-asset headcount index also applies here. (And also if transfer changes are among the rich).

4.0 CONCLUSION

From a perspective of moral justice, it can be argued that poverty alleviation must be resource-driven. To achieve that end, the tools must be user-friendly. In this chapter I introduced an *asset-by-asset point index*. I have made it simple to be able to reach my audience: the politicians, the community chief, and technocrats in a quest to develop a

home-grown poverty index. I believe the indices posited here will find meaning to these users. Laderchi et al. (2003:244) strongly agree that there is an acknowledgement that poverty is multi-dimensional while Hallerod (1991) argues that different measures produce different results. It is possible that those measured as asset-poor may not be measured as poor using a different set of measures, however, we find solace in the notion that we seem to all have the same goal: that of eradicating poverty which must be tackled from different angles to achieve the desired goal. Critically, in this endeavour, I posit, firstly, a direct approach to the measurement of poverty – plough for plough in Mashonaland West. That is, if you need a plough, you must be given a plough. Secondly, the use of the *consensual approach*, through the ballot, allowed the removal of value judgment from the experts to the people themselves to select the necessities they deem essential to achieve a satisfactory standard of living. These two aspects find resonance with Mack and Lansley (1985) and the Leyden School's approaches and have found new meaning in a rural setting of Mashonaland West in Zimbabwe wherein the people defined their own Minimally Adequate Asset Level (MAAL). In a study in Malawi, Ellis (2003:22) found that:

In addition to land and livestock, other key assets of rural families in Malawi are their own labour (economically active adults in the household), their educational attainments (measured by years of education summed across active adults), and ownership of productive implements and tools measured as the aggregate value owned.

This is yet another perspective from which assets can be viewed. It is worth noting that Mack and Lansley (1985) and Hallerod (1994) did not traverse the asset-based route since the items they looked at were very different as they occurred in a different context such as affording a hair cut every third month, celebrations on special occasions, a night out once a fortnight, a holiday away from home for one week a year, not with relatives or friends, new not second hand clothes etc. The need for different indices in different circumstances perhaps brings diversity to poverty studies. I looked at items that can be provided to promote self-reliance at a local level as well as encourage household

economic diversification and still resonate with the people of Mashonaland West province in Zimbabwe.

I close with the insightful words:

Most statements about poverty suggest objectivity, that is, it is implied that there is a certain reality “out there” which poverty statistics capture (Laderchi: et al. 2003: 245).

I hope we capture that reality objectively using the new measures herein posited.

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CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

This thesis extended the discussion on the measurement of poverty by revisiting the income threshold and supporting a notion of an asset threshold for developing countries using the Consensual Approach. The thesis proposed that rather than use income generic measures of poverty in developing countries, a new approach should be researched that takes into account the underlying asset base and prevailing norms and values in a self-definition of poverty. It developed an asset-threshold for poverty that can be used to count the poor, rank geographic areas and provide some spatial depiction of poverty in the form of asset poverty maps. Using this method, poverty will be defined as a shortfall from the asset-threshold, the *minimally adequate asset level* (MAAL). It should be noted that the asset-threshold is contextual and location-specific in nature.

It further argued that researching a new asset-threshold is worthwhile in so far as using such a threshold as a basis for intervention makes the intervention direct, for example, asset for asset. Governments and NGOs will find an entry point with targeted interventions, which can be administered piecemeal depending on the available capacities.

The asset-threshold brings out particular specific and peculiar circumstances of the poor as well as providing a fresh perspective and framework for measuring poverty. It can be useful for purposes of allocating resources and setting and monitoring targets.

In this thesis I provide another lens through which poverty can be understood by postulating a new model, the Poverty Diagnostic Model, for the analysis of poverty with a focus on the micro-level individual and community useful for targeting certain behavioural outcomes and in order to change specific perceptions. (For example, how ignorance and lack of knowledge and information as well as cultural taboos can be addressed if these prove to be a hindrance to removing people from poverty). This implies that the PDM may require psychologists to work in the realm of poverty with a

new thrust and new form and content to go to the root causes of poverty and perhaps engender, nurture and develop the required responses.

This thesis provided an extension of the FGT which takes into account assets, income and debt (liabilities) in the measurement of poverty. The FGT extensions open up the possibilities of calculating geographic asset poverty indices, asset/income poverty indices, networth indices and asset gini coefficients etc. What should governments transfer, between assets and income? My answer would be assets to extricate the poor from poverty traps. While income is easy to distribute, assets are a different kettle of fish where the issues of: what, where, when, how much and in what order etc? what quality? have still to be addressed. Thus, the issues of practicality still haunt the asset – based measures.

Clearly, from the evidence in focus group discussions, the state of being poor invokes trans-generational reproduction of poverty and it became clear that shocks minimise the chances of exiting poverty especially if their impacts are profound and prolonged such as drought. The findings also show that barter trade collapses in poverty, as the poor do not have items with which to engage in barter. It can be posited that barter works better where there is room for asset accumulation and a functioning economy where money and other assets are changing hands.

In creating a poverty index, it is imperative to place assets at the core of the index. It became evident from this paper that there is a need to properly manage economy-wide shocks such as hyper-inflation given their negative impact on the livelihoods of the poor. Of critical importance, in that same vein, is the dire need to enhance the capacity and capabilities of the poor to accumulate assets as they open up the possibility of reducing their vulnerability.

The primary purpose of this thesis was to fill a gap in the measurement of poverty by defining a context-sensitive, fixed bundle of assets – *the minimally adequate asset level*. This paper has managed to transform the asset threshold from a theoretical plane to a

practical platform. The MAAL is the asset threshold against which a person or household can be considered as poor or not poor. The MAAL reflects the ontology of existence and people's conception of necessary assets to achieve a socially acceptable standard of living based on consensus.

This thesis is important for policy because it proposes a shift in mindset from merely providing cash and food grants to interventions on the less ordained path of asset distribution. It is now possible to generalise, not with regard to populations or different universes, but about theoretical and practical propositions of distributing what people deem fit for the achievement of a contextually-defined standard of living: plough for plough in Mashonaland West. The identification and qualification modalities of who is poor and who is not, based on their asset portfolios, have to be worked out because there are costs related to the distribution of these assets. Indeed, there is an asset threshold below which people can fail to function within the confines of the norms and traditions of the communities in which they live. It can be argued, both on moral and economic grounds, that a poor asset base is a key precursor to poverty.

The need for different indices in different circumstances perhaps brings diversity to poverty studies. I looked at items that can be provided to promote self-reliance at a local level as well as encourage household economic diversification and still resonate with the people of Mashonaland West.

LAST WORD

The thesis provided some conceptualisation of poverty in rural Zimbabwe during a period of socio-politico-economic instability and provided critical commentary on the vital subject of livelihoods, struggles and strategies in a contemporary economic context.

The thesis looked at how inhabitants of Mashonaland West experience 'the economy' and at uselessness of NGOs and government aid to those who do not fall into the target groups (widows and children).

The thesis examined critical issues that threaten livelihoods and provided useful tools, namely programme design (PDM) and targeting (asset-by-asset point index). Noteworthy problems are natural calamities. However, economic-political interventions are also a major threat to livelihoods which have largely been ignored in literature. Furthermore, productive assets can be looked at from various perspectives: as a cause of or remedy for poverty; a cause of asset accumulation and exits from poverty; assets as better markers of material poverty; assets as repositories of value which can be sold in times of crisis; assets as means of insuring against risk; assets as allowing for livelihood diversification and assets as providing a better guide for poverty reduction strategies. These are areas I posit for future investigations.

MAIN APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Developing a Poverty Index for African economies using the Consensual Approach: The Case of Mashonaland West, Zimbabwe

In developing this Questionnaire Guide the following considerations were taken into account:

- 1) The study objectives *viz*:
 - enhance knowledge in the area by interrogating what goes beyond money in the measurement of poverty;
 - be useful to policy makers whose concern is targeting.
 - deepening understanding of Consensual Measurement of poverty and flagging areas for further research from an African perspective.
 - Develop a home grown poverty index .

- 2) **Research concerns**

What factors affect perceptions of poverty and thus should be taken into account in a consensual approach to poverty: Does age matter in the perceptions of poverty? Does income matter? Does gender matter? Does household type matter? Does region/location/context matter? What is the Minimally Adequate asset level that a person must have not to be poor?

- 3) **Hypotheses to be tested:**

While income may be an aspect of poverty in Africa, access to assets is important in a self-definition of poverty that uses local norms as the measure of well-being.

Sub-hypothesis: Issues such as age, gender, location and so forth matter in shaping this definition.

Focus Group Discussion

1. What is your understanding of poverty/or of the state of being poor?
2. What kind of assets do people need not to be poor?
3. How many of such assets do people need not to be poor?
4. Is there is a measurable threshold of assets that constitutes poverty?
5. Other than assets what else do people need?
6. What do you consider as necessities of life for a person in Mashonaland West?
6. What are the things that could make someone in Mashonaland West content in life?
7. How would one describe a poor family in Mashonaland West?
8. How would one describe a rich family in Mashonaland West?
9. How would one describe the assets of a poor family?
10. How would one describe the assets of a rich family?
11. What are the events in life that can make a person poorer in Mashonaland West?
12. What are the events in life that can make a household poorer in Mashonaland West?
13. How would one describe poor villages from rich villages in Mashonaland West?
14. How would one describe the attributes of a poor person (man/woman)?
How would one describe the attributes of a rich person (man/woman)?
15. How would one describe the attributes of a poor family?
16. How would one describe the attributes of a rich family?
17. What are the major problems in the community at present?
18. What are the problems that people are facing in Mashonaland West at the household level?
19. What living standards should all families in Mashonaland West have today?

20. Why are there people in need?

21. What are the necessities of life that you feel all families in Mashonaland West should have today?

The poll (for all persons 15+ years old)

Household ID

Age

Gender

Male

Female

Marital status

Location

Rural

Urban

Household headship

Yes

No

Monthly Income

Z\$

Two steps at the base of the Consensual Approach:

1. identify what constitutes socially perceived necessities from a list of consumption items from a majority of respondents.
2. and identify those who are forced to do without these necessities.

Thus, the poll will take the following format:

1. Place in the appropriate box items that you perceive as *necessities* of life that affect your well being in Mashonaland West
2. Place in the appropriate box items that you perceive as *necessities* that you are forced to do without in Mashonaland West.

3. Place in the appropriate box assets that you have

Place in the appropriate box **assets** that you **have** and could **not do without**

Place in the appropriate box **assets** that you **have** and could **do without**

Not applicable/Don't know (Box)

4. Place in the appropriate box assets that you do not have

Place in the appropriate box **assets** that you do not have but do not want (not necessary)

Place in the appropriate box **assets** you do not have and can't afford.

Not applicable/Don't know (Box)

5. Place in appropriate box the necessities that you feel all families in Mashonaland West should have today:

- a garden
- a hut
- a granary
- livestock/cattle, goats, chickens
- well
- toilet
- bed
- 2 hot meals
- friends
- radio (**these should come from the Focus Group Discussion**)

6. Place in appropriate box the **assets** that you feel all families in Mashonaland West should have today to make ends meet:

- **a garden**
- **a hut**
- **a granary**
- **livestock/cattle, goats, chickens**
- **well**
- **toilet**
- **bed**
- **radio (these should come from the Focus Group Discussion)**

7. What are the problems in the household at present?

- school fees
- orphans

- food availability (**these should come from the Focus Group Discussion**)
8. What problems do face around your home at present?
- **stock theft**
 - **wild animals**
 - **mice rats (these should come from the Focus Group Discussion)**

In-Depth Interviews with Local leaderships and Community Based Organisations

1. **What are the major problems in the community at present?**
2. **What is your understanding of poverty/or of the state of being poor?**
3. **What kind of assets do people need not to be poor?**
4. **How many of such assets do people need not to be poor?**
5. **Is there is a measurable threshold of assets that constitutes poverty?**
6. **Other than assets what else do people need?**
7. **What do you consider as necessities of life for a person in Mashonaland West?**
8. **What are the things that could make someone in Mashonaland West content in life?**
9. **How would one describe a poor family in Mashonaland West?**
10. **How would one describe a rich family in Mashonaland West?**
11. **How would one describe the assets of a poor family?**
12. **How would one describe the assets of a rich family?**
13. **What are the events in life that can make a person poorer in Mashonaland West?**
14. **What are the events in life that can make a household poorer in Mashonaland West?**
15. **How would one describe poor villages from rich villages in Mashonaland West?**
16. **How would one describe the attributes of a poor person (man/woman)?
How would one describe the attributes of a rich person (man/woman)?**

17. How would one describe the attributes of a poor family?
18. How would one describe the attributes of a rich family?
19. What are the major problems in the community at present?
20. What are the problems that people are facing in Mashonaland West?
21. What living standards should all families in Mashonaland West have today?
22. Why are there people in need?
23. What type of assistance do you provide to communities?
24. How would you compare life in the village to that in town?

Policy makers

1. What type of assistance is being provided in the area

By central Government

Drought relief

Child Maintenance

Basic Education Assistance (BEAM)

Supplementary feeding

Public works

Other.....

Local Authority

Drought relief

Child Maintenance

Basic Education Assistance (BEAM)

Supplementary feeding

Public works

Other

2. **What criteria are being used for targeting?**
3. **Assess the effectiveness/usefulness of the instruments currently being used:**
Bad Satisfactory Good No Opinion
4. **What kind of assets people need not to be poor?**
5. **How many of such assets do people need not to be poor?**
6. **Other than assets what else do people need?**
7. **What do you consider as necessities of life for a person in Mashonaland West?**
8. **What are the things that could make someone in Mashonaland West content in life?**

SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN ZIMBABWE – AN ENDLESS TUG OF WAR⁵¹

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Musil (1991) defines a social contract as ‘an agreement between Government and social partners (business and labour) which relates to a joint approach to resolving socio-economic problems and the management of change’. The realisation of such a social contract in Zimbabwe has been illusive to the detriment of the well being of the general populace who has to bear the brunt of the economic hardships the country is currently facing.

In order to unpack and understand the dynamics of social dialogue in Zimbabwe, the researcher undertook a survey of the opinions of ‘outsiders’ – the common people who were not party to the social dialogue parties in Zimbabwe but were in many ways affected by the decisions it made. This group consisted youth numbering about 23 within the age cohort 20 – 35 in a Focus Group Discussion format. The second Focus Group Discussion was held with technocrats, who are termed, ‘insiders’ who participate in the dialogue process as official representatives of their constituencies – labour, business and government. The terms ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ are only relevant to this article.

2.0 SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN ZIMBABWE – A BRIEF HISTORY

In 1998, Government announced a major devaluation of the Zimbabwe dollar from Z\$18.6 to the green back in December 1997 to Z\$37.3 by December 1998. At the same time gratuities of Z\$50 000 each were awarded to the war veterans and Zimbabwe got enmeshed in the Democratic Republic of Congo war. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund suspended all multi-lateral aid assistance. Other international donor agencies followed suit. These factors affected the economy leading to the development of a socio-economic crisis. As the crisis brewed, organised labour agitated workers to go on

⁵¹ This article was published in the *South African Labour Bulletin*, Vol 30, Number 4, October/November 2006

mass strikes and stayaways. From that period onwards, we observed periods of confrontation between the workers and government, the workers teaming up with employers to confront the state; employers on their own confronting the state etc. Thus, these societal conflicts brought the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF) to the fore in a bid to resolve these societal contradictions.

The TNF is chaired by the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare in line with ILO Convention 144 on tripartite consultation. The President of the Employers Confederation of Zimbabwe (EMCOZ) leads organized Business. The President of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) leads organised Labour. At inception it was agreed that the TNF was not a decision-making body although it could conclude binding protocols based on good faith and trust and the subordination of sector interests to national goals.

The tripartite consultations within the ambit of the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF), led the social partners to agree to the removal of the 2.5 per cent increase in sales tax with effect from 1, November 1998; the removal of the development levy on workers with effect from January, 1, 1999; increasing the tax threshold to \$2,000 per month and increasing the bonus free component from \$1,100 to \$2,000 with effect from 1, November, 1998 (Amanor-Wilks, 2001:111). Because of the February 2000 Constitutional Referendum and the June 2000 Parliamentary Elections, a TNF meeting could not be convened during that period. In January 2001, the social partners **SIGNED** *the Draft Declaration of Intent Towards a Social Contract*. which provided a general framework for negotiation and conclusion of specific protocols covering issues such as Prices and Incomes, Economic Stabilisation, Anti-Corruption, Health and Safety at Work, Empowerment, Skills Development, Productivity enhancement; Fuel Pricing; Privatization, Budget Performance, National Health Insurance Scheme and so forth. In August, 2001, the TNF agreed on setting up of a price surveillance and monitoring unit which focused on controlling the prices of basic commodities such as bread, cooking oil, maize meal, milk, beef, salt, transport and school levies. Since this was in the run-up to the 2002 Presidential Elections, social dialogue took a back seat.

Prices of goods and services kept on going up. With the intention of protecting the consumer, from November 15, 2002, Government announced a freeze on prices of all goods and services for 6 months up to March 2003 in terms of *Statutory Instrument 302, Control of Goods Price Freeze of 2002*. This move by Government did not go down well with Business within the context of tripartism. In January, 2003 the *Prices and Incomes Stabilisation Protocol* was signed by the social partners with a lifespan of 6 months. It dealt with how prices and incomes should be *managed* rather than be *controlled*. It had an overarching objective of achieving *affordability* and *availability* of products while ensuring business *viability* and setting out obligations for each social partner. The Prices and Incomes Stabilisation Protocol Protocol expired in June, 2003. On evaluation, it appears the Protocol did not achieve the intended goals of affordability and availability as its provisions were continually flouted by Business through persistent price increases and re-Branding of products, actions which were not sanctioned by the TNF and also reflected the incapacity by the relevant authorities to enforce the law. Labour, a member of the Tripartite Price Monitoring and Surveillance Unit, had by April, 2003, pulled out of the talks in protest against a fuel price increase effected in that month. Business argued that it took such strategies (price increases and re-branding) to keep their firms afloat and viable. Furthermore, the provisions of the regulations, it was argued actually created and perpetuated the parallel/black market in goods and services. (The Business Herald, 4 February, 2003, P.5; The Business Daily, 8 May, 2003, P. 27).

From April 2003 to March 2006, no meetings were held between the social partners in the spirit of social dialogue and tripartism indicating a virtual paralysis in talks and negotiation leading to the betrayal of the populace. However, as from March to July 2006, the social partners engaged each other to try and solve the country's socio-economic problems. Once again, the talks hit a snag and social dialogue once again took a knock following the refusal by Business to sign the Income and Prices Stabilisation Protocol which was meant to curb inflation and address the issue of minimum wages linked to a Poverty Datum Line. It is Business's contention that minimum wages should be de-linked from the Poverty Datum Line and rather be determined by National

Employment Councils taking into cognizance the principle of 'ability to pay' as well as the inflation and exchange rates prevailing in the country (Herald, 27 July, 2006, P. 4).

3.0 A KEY INFORMANTS' PERSPECTIVE

A SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) of the TNF was carried out with the respondents. Some of the strengths of the TNF as highlighted by the participants include: its potential to engender a dialogue spirit; the fact that it provides a platform for negotiation; and that it has some unifying capacity as it has the necessary structures held by its constituent members who could leverage that for purposes of lobbying and positive advocacy.

According to the respondents in this survey, inherent in the TNF are the following weaknesses: there is a lot of politicking in the TNF. It is a loose association that is not sanctions bearing but characterised with a lot of backstabbing and therefore has the inherent inability to sustain permanent dialogue as a result of easy entry and exit. According to the surveyed respondents, the TNF is threatened by hidden and political agendas; mistrust among the negotiating parties; the political instability prevailing in the country; withdrawals by partners at will and not being all-inclusive. However, the spirit of dialogue permeated the social partners as opposed to confrontation, the problems the country is currently facing to the proportions of a socio-economic crisis and tripartism are some of the opportunities cited by the respondents which the TNF can exploit.

3.1 POLITICS AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Views of the interviewees regarding the sustainability of TNF/social dialogue processes under conditions of polarisation were sought. According to the survey, the respondents are of the opinion that social dialogue cannot thrive under conditions of polarisation citing the fact that decisions and consensus are difficult to make due to bad faith which creates a *win-lose* situation.

Some of the successes of the TNF cited by the respondents include:

- the bringing down of the prices of fuel;
- the introduction of a Prices and Incomes Protocol;
- bringing about a forum for discussion within the context of a highly politically charged environment.

Some of the setbacks mentioned by the respondents include the fact that:

- It provided a forum for ‘arm-twisting’;
- It provided no solution to the black/parallel market;
- It failed to please all parties and was exclusionary;
- It appeared to provide a slow feedback process due to the extensive consultations that the social partners have to undertake with their constituencies;
- It lacked transparency/no openness;
- It suffered from politicking;
- It increased rather than reduced political tension.

On how the TNF could be improved, respondents were of the opinion that:

- It should be granted some authority/legal status;
- All social partners must show commitment to dialogue;
- It must broaden its representation;
- The process must be driven by a common agenda;
- There is need to conscientise the public about its deliberations via an Information and Education Campaign strategy;
- That politics must be removed from the agenda., however respecting diverse opinions and views;

Respondents had great expectations from the TNF. These included the following:

- the creation of harmonious industrial relations; stable prices and a stable economy;
- improved/better living standards;
- economic and social change, prosperity, peace and economic development;
- joint ownership of outcomes; and
- democracy and rule of law;

The youth were asked to give their views on whether Trade unionism/business and politics can mix. Below are some of the views expressed by the youth with respect to their perspectives on the topic of trade unionism, (business) and politics and their relationship in the context of Zimbabwe.

View 1: Inseparability of trade unionism/business and politics

‘These are one – one economy and one country. Therefore, the issues are not separable’

‘Trade unions do not operate in a vacuum’

‘There is a link, but it must be negotiable’

‘These go hand in hand in so far as opposition parties have come out of trade unions’

‘These are inseparable because of the motives (and ends) of all the quarters - government, labour and business are political’.

Suffice to say these views suggest the inseparability of labour issues from politics. Ultimately, the boundary between politics and trade unionism is indistinct thus making it difficult to know when one is traversing political or trade union terrain. A corollary of this is that one is susceptible to conflating politics with economics. If that is the case it may also be naïve to assume that trade unionism is not politics given the galvanisation of the factors and compulsions that ultimately reflect politics within the labour movements. We come to this conclusion because some decisions, though economic, may have political ramifications and reverberations and vice versa. Using the quote from the Focus Group Discussion that perhaps brings some moderation, ‘there is a link, but it must be negotiable’ offers hope and a way forward.

View 2: Separability of trade unionism/business and politics

‘These are two different games and the rules are different’

‘Trade unionism should not be involved in politics and similarly, politics has no place in trade unionism’

‘On Trade unionism and politics, the two do not mix, politics distorts the labour agenda’

‘Workers have different political views, they become polarised’

‘Trade unions must not be used by politicians’

‘For effectiveness, there must be separated for the sake of workers’ interests’

These are separate because you fragment the union on political lines, as workers come from different political persuasions’

‘By indulging in politic, the unions would lose the workers agenda’.

These views suggest the separability of politics and labour issues. The views expressed above mirror the opinions of the key informants as it relates to the current Zimbabwean situation. And as such, these have to be confronted head-on by current policy makers from government, business and labour and the rest of society. The foregoing shows that only through negotiation can divergent views find expression and, therefore, resolution. The involvement of politics appears situational and further complicates the situation as in the case of Zimbabwe, the impacts have largely been destabilizing and damaging to the economy.

In terms of the way forward, participants in the focus group discussion of ‘insiders’, suggested that the TNF should have a Communication Committee which would deal with all issues relating to the TNF’s Public Relations Functions. They pointed out that it should have a well-laid out programme so that TNF decisions are communicated to the public with ONE voice. On possibilities of bipartite meetings, the participants pointed out that this should not be repeated as all the three social partners must be involved, that is government, labour and business. On stayaways and lockouts, the participants were of the opinion that stayaways and lockouts are part and parcel of the democratic process.

Overall, they were of the opinion that even if trade unionism and politics mix, there are limits to which parties should go. They pointed out that people can belong to institutions, organisations and parties of different shades and colours, but the issues to be discussed at the TNF should largely be developmental rather than political.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The socio-economic crisis in Zimbabwe, it can be argued, can be solved within the context of a dialogue spirit. However, according to the survey, the TNF under current circumstances of backstabbing and easy entry and exit of partners has the inherent inability to sustain permanent dialogue. Hidden political agendas and mistrust weigh against the TNF deliberations. These are the issues that the social partners have to confront head-on and resolve for there to be any meaningful progress.

While the key informants are of the opinion that social dialogue cannot thrive under conditions of polarisation, the insights help us come to the conclusion that even if trade unionism and politics mix, there are limits to which parties should go because this can only fragment people along political lines. There are people in labour, business, and government belonging to institutions, organizations and parties of different shades and colours. This then can render the camps fragmented. Trade unionism in Zimbabwe reflects an overlap between what Vlok (2000) termed social movement unionism ('characterised by close relations with the community, not sticking to shop-floor or bread and butter issues but being involved in broader political issues'), strategic unionism (characterised by 'sophisticated participation in tripartite bodies') and business unionism (characterised by the 'emergence of individualism'). To this I add opportunism. It appears that social dialogue thrives more in a multiparty democracy than a largely bipolar democracy such as is prevailing in Zimbabwe. Thus social dialogue should provide us the space for possibility rather than space for negation. From the Zimbabwean tug-of-war, we are poorer in terms of finding sustainable solutions to the socio-economic crisis while the general populace suffers.

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WITHER DIALOGUE – WITHER ZIMBABWE⁵²

Social dialogue has failed to produce results in Zimbabwe against a backdrop of continued economic and political instability. It has been unable to deliver because the issues at stake are political and go beyond labour and economics.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO, n.d),

collective bargaining as a form of social dialogue, can be seen as a useful indicator of the capacity within a country to engage in national level tripartism with the goal of promoting consensus building and democratic involvement among the main stakeholders in order to resolve important economic and social issues, encourage good governance, advance social and industrial peace and stability and boost economic progress.

Alas, the fervent hope that the fruits of social dialogue, in the form of the signing of the long awaited social contract on 1 June 2007 would ensure concrete deliverables for ordinary Zimbabweans, has not materialised.

The social contract was negotiated by the social partners – government, labour and business - under the auspices of the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF) since 1998. Expectations around what the social contract would deliver were high. Zimbabweans expected price stability, availability of basic commodities and fuel at affordable prices. Indeed, the joy was short-lived. No sooner had the ink on the social contract dried, prices started skyrocketing leading the government to order a price reduction by 50 per cent.

The *Incomes and Pricing Stabilisation Protocol* promised the reduction of inflation from 3700 per cent to 25 per cent by the end of the 2007; reduction of the government budget

⁵² This article was published in *South African Labour Bulletin* Volume 32 Number 1, March/April 2008

deficit to 10 per cent of Gross Domestic Product and to address the fuel/urban transport problem. *The Protocol on Production Viability* promised employment creation and sustenance and skills development, retention and attraction. *The Protocol on Management of Foreign Currency* promised to ensure foreign currency availability in the official market; reduction in the smuggling and leakages of foreign currency and the reduction in the rate price distortion.

According to the Kingdom Financial Holdings Bulletin July 2007, the Zimbabwean government issued two directives in June 2007 after prices had risen by about 300 per cent in one week. It, firstly, ordered producers, retailers and wholesalers to reduce prices of basic commodities including transport by up to 50 per cent with immediate effect and, secondly, it ordered business to retain 18 June 2007 prices while businesses' proposed [price] increase[s] were being considered by the National Incomes and Pricing Commission.

The reasons behind government's move could be traced to comments made by Industry and International Trade Minister Obert Mpofu who reportedly argued that the escalating price increases were a political ploy engineered by detractors of the Government to effect an illegal regime change against the ruling party, ZANU-PF following the failure of illegal economic sanctions. As a result, the government, he argued, could not stand idly by while the situation continued. These directives coupled with subsequent arrests and fining of business people in breach of the price control laws led to increased confrontation between the state and business.

Further measures were introduced to effect controls on imports and exports. As a result of these controls, import permits were required for a range of basic agricultural goods such as vegetable oil, mealie-meal, sugar, margarine, beef, cheese, fertiliser, milk powder etc. As a result of these measures and the introduction of price controls, supermarket shelves remain empty with the black market thriving. What is really at stake in Zimbabwe?

At stake is both economic and political power which has led to infighting between the social partners. To a sceptic, theirs has certainly been an unholy, unworkable alliance given their ideological differences and opposing interests. Thus, the turbulent economic situation has created space for new struggles of an economic and political nature (we observe another struggle of nationalism against whatever else is standing in its face) with the implication of a reproduction of social, political and economic instability within the country as well as a terminal crisis of dialogic paralysis for as long as the economy remains under siege.

Recent developments have revealed a serious disregard for the due processes of social dialogue. This poses a serious problem as to where the solution to the impasse lies – internally or externally of the social dialogue realm? Social dialogue provided a window of hope in the face of an economy in deep crisis.

The failure of dialogue is indeed both an injustice to our humanness (ubuntu) and history. The current protagonists on all divides are going to be judged unfavourably. As Falzon (1998:43) puts it:

The dialogue, I am referring to, the play of dialogical relations, in which we are both affected by others and affect them, in turn in a reciprocal interplay, is ultimately constitutive of our historical existence.

What is clear is that the failure of social dialogue has left in its wake a legacy of rising hyperinflation, unemployment, severe capacity under-utilisation and a flight of capital and human resources. While the economic volatility is evident for all to see, the political substratum is less evident for characterisation. In the crisis, assets are being transferred from the poor (who are stripped and dispossessed in their quest for a livelihood) to the rich. This further dashes the hopes and possibilities of the poor embedding a state of unevenly skewed wealth distribution coupled with little production in manufacturing and agriculture in the wake of heightened speculation for foreign and other scarce commodities to make a quick buck.

Whilst the social partners have failed dismally, it should be acknowledged that given the politically charged nature of the environment, only a political solution would resolve the so called 'Zimbabwean crisis'. Perhaps this may help us to look for other alternatives and reconfigure social dialogue and praxis in the face of these realities.

The much awaited March 2008 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections do hold some hope for Zimbabweans that winners and losers shall accept the election results so that the country can re-position itself in Africa as a bread basket. Thus, political consensus may lead to other consensuses including labour, economic, social and so forth. The deadlock perhaps signifies contemporary conditions of dialogue framed in both economic and politically intractable quagmires which breed a kind of parasitic, mercenaric, scavenger type of social dialogue of the kind we see in the theatre of Zimbabwe. Hope is all that we can hold on to.

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To the Editors

I thank you all for your comments which I received based on my paper: "**Revisiting the income threshold in the measurement of poverty: Towards developing an Asset – based Poverty Index for African economies using the Consensual Approach**"

I have addressed their concerns some one by one. Some appear as comments and others necessitated reworking the content of the paper. I shall highlight these circumstances as they arise.

1st reviewer's comments

1. The paper is informed by the Zimbabwean experience which may be fairly unique in Africa. However the introduction and conclusion present this experience as if it were readily applicable throughout Africa. Noteworthy is that only natural calamities and no political interventions are mentioned as threats to livelihoods on Page 2.

My response: The reviewer is right that it may appear as if the paper is suggesting that the experience is applicable throughout Africa. The experience is contextual, perhaps locality-specific and therefore no generalisations can be envisaged using specific locations or case studies unless typicality can be established. My reasoning is supported by others. Generalising results from case studies, however, requires a judgment about the typicality of findings in the population about which a generalisation is made (Hammersley, 1992, cited in Shaffer (2002:48). According to Shaffer (2002) the crux of the issues lies in determining 'typicality' which in practice is very hard to do, especially given that the results [may be] highly contextual and may defy generalization.

Indeed, there are other threats to livelihoods such as wars, civil violence, political unrest, fires, famines, epidemics, sudden death in a family, earthquakes, hurricanes, locusts, birds and worms etc. The natural calamities mentioned were merely illustrative and not exhaustive.

2. The second question is whether the proposed consensual approach will be acceptable to the 'experts' who are not party to the consensus. The author might like to comment on this point. It is argued that the Consensual Approach is informed by local conditions. In which case, it might be difficult to compare asset portfolios across geographical regions. Thus the posited approach may be equally open to favouritism as conventional poverty measures when it comes to deciding which areas should become recipients of poverty relief. The author might give an example of asset portfolios that are comparable across rural areas.

My response: Indeed the Consensual Approach can only be useful and helpful if accepted by the key players, that is, the communities and the 'experts' if it articulates that community's aspirations and priorities within the confines of their resources and capacities. If the Consensual Approach is accepted as a methodology to do so, then it should work. Asset portfolios are not meant to be compared across regions. The idea of an asset threshold based on a self-definition of poverty is to tap on local practices and norms and come up with an Asset Bundle/Portfolio considered essential or necessities by a society to achieve a standard of living. This would help to define an asset poverty line which is a context-defined, fixed bundle of assets in their natural/physical form or expressed in monetary terms and regarded as essential or necessities by a society to achieve a standard of living

I have actually moved from theory to practice by implementing the methodology and the ideas I am putting forward in this paper in one of the Provinces in Zimbabwe. The paper is currently under peer-review in another journal. I have added the following in the current paper to achieve clarity.

The Consensual Approach is an approach whereby public opinion is used, such as via a ballot to determine socially perceived necessities of life (see Mack and Lansley 1985). Middleton (2000) notes that consensus can also be reached through discussion, negotiation and eventual agreement and, thus, the lack of certain goods and services which are believed by the majority of the population to be essential falls under consensual measures. To give effect to the voting process, people will be given ballot papers as is done during parliamentary and presidential elections to vote, instead of voting for their Member of Parliament or President, they will vote for the assets they deem to be standard-of-living-defining and necessary to achieve a societally acceptable standard of living. Each ballot paper will bear the name and picture of the asset. Three categories of ballot boxes may be used for this purpose: Most Important, Important and Less Important. In line with the voting process, voters will place their ballot papers in the appropriate box and winning assets will constitute the asset threshold based on a majority of votes as is the norm in democratic spaces. The asset poverty line would be defined as a fixed bundle of assets in their natural/physical form or in monetary terms regarded as essential or necessities by a society to achieve a standard of living. What this paper is advocating is: if people vote unanimously for chickens, give them chickens, if they vote for goats, give them goats; hoes for hoes - not food when they want fertilisers and farming implements.

Since the reviewer asked for an example, I am tempted to provide some results from my study.

In determining the asset threshold, according to the Mack and Lansley approach, all items voted for by a majority of the people constituting 50% of the vote, were considered necessities – that is standard-of-living-setting assets. Thus, using the Mack and Lansley approach of a 50% cut off, the following assets emerged to make up the Asset Threshold (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Asset threshold using Mack and Lansley 50% cut off

Cattle	96
Hut/house	90
Land	84
Ox – drawn plough	84
Garden	76
Wheel-barrow	76
Ox – drawn cultivator	72
Ox – drawn harrow	72
Scotch cart	72
Hoe	68
Tractor	68
Goats	54
Spade	52
Axe	50

This Asset Threshold/Bundle was quantified and valued in Focus Group Discussions (See Table 2).

Table 2: Asset threshold using Mack and Lansley 50% cut off

Asset	No. required	Unit Value	Total cos
Cattle	4	8 million	32 million
Ox – drawn plough	1	3 million	3 million
Wheel-barrow	1	4 million	4 million
Ox – drawn cultivator	1	3 million	3 million
Ox – drawn harrow	1	3 million	3 million
Scotch cart	1	10 million	10 million
Hoe	4	300,000	1,2 million
Goats	4	3 million	12 million
Spade	1	300,000	300,000
Axe	4	300,000	300,000
Total value			68,800,000

At time of the survey the exchange rate was Z\$10,000 = South African R1
US\$1 = South African R 6. Thus, the asset poverty line would be R6,800 or about US\$1,150.

3. To this reader it seems that the descriptions of conventional poverty measures are given in fair detail including formulas. (Are these really essential in an essay?) In contrast, it is mainly the principles underlying the new approach that are presented to readers. In Section 4 it might be assumed that the Consensual Approach will make copious use of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods. However, there are virtually no references to the PRA literature.

These are fair comments. I have removed the formulas. Indeed I only mentioned PRA literature to the extent that I deemed it relevant to my thesis and limitations of space.

4. Quibble: Table 2 cites a house and car as 2nd scale assets. No examples are given for the 1st and 3rd scale assets. It is not clear whether the 2nd scale items are merely offered as examples or are fixed. Surely, a car is not often regarded as a typical rural asset. In addition, a car might be regarded as a status symbol as well as a resource. In contrast, shelter is usually considered a basic need, so some sort of housing would presumably have to be included in the 1st scale.

I have removed that whole section as it detracts from the Minimally Adequate Asset Level (MAAL). There are no fixed bundles of assets as they are voted for by communities. I however appreciate the comments for purposes of refining the scaling of assets.

2nd reviewer's comments

This paper touches on some important issues – namely, the need for appropriate measures to guide the provision of targeted social relief in Zimbabwe, the difficulties with purely money-metric or cash based approaches, the need to consider the role played by assets, and the need for poverty measurements to be based on local consensus(es) on minimally accepted levels of poverty. Unfortunately it does not cast much light on any of these issues, mostly because the paper suffers from a number of serious underlying areas of conceptual confusion. These are too many to detail in a separate report; this referee therefore has appended some inline comments to the electronic document in the hope that these are helpful. Briefly however, some of the key issues are that

- 1) **The author critiques existing measures in light of their inadequacy to the task targeting food assistance. However, the author ignores most of the real work that has been done in this area in the development of regional measures of food insecurity and vulnerability. Instead she/he criticises measures such as the HDI, which were never developed for this purpose. Additionally, the measure s/he proposes is vulnerable to precisely the same criticism, as it is not a food insecurity measure.**

I must admit, all measures have their advantages and disadvantages. In using them, perhaps all we are trying to do is to understand poverty given its multi-dimensionality. The measure I propose is not necessarily a food insecurity measure. Rightly or wrongly, the HIP was being used by the Zimbabwe Government to allocate funds to disadvantaged communities with school fees assistance under the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) programme.

- 2) **The author appears to think that she/he is making an argument for measuring assets rather than income. The extensive literature (Carter, Barrett, May etc) on measuring asset based poverty is almost entirely ignored. Possibly because of this, the paper seems to suffer from some elementary misunderstandings; e.g, the fact that even asset based measures are very attentive to the income that can be derived from assets. Secondly, the author does not appear to understand that for most econometric approaches to poverty, income covers non-monetary income as well. Finally, the crises of vulnerability the author invokes in the opening pages (droughts, flood etc) are precisely crises in which people are unable to derive utility from their assets; asset based measures would be useless for the purpose.**

For the reviewer's information, this work is being undertaken the supervision of one of the authors he mentions. I am trying to construct a home grown poverty line based on the experiences of African people. I have read the work of Carter, May, Barrett, Naschold, Aguerro and Adato. Their thrust is totally different from my work. They are using parametric and non-parametric methods to distinguish deep-rooted, persistent and structural poverty from transient. In that vein, they use principal factor and principal component analysis. Among the assets they include in their models are things such as household size, number of able-bodied adults, land owned, total livestock units, financial assets (e.g. amount paid into an account, loans received), number of illiterate household members, number of household members with primary/secondary/college education etc.

I believe my scope goes beyond that because in African economies income might be important in RSA but not as much in other African countries where it is poorly measured. I am looking at tangible assets and the multiple incomes they generate. For instance, having a cow leads to different income streams. A cow as an asset – can have as many as four income streams - the meat, the milk, the dung and the status in community. This is the broader approach I am taking. Men in an African community can 'earn' their status, which can be political status/ influence which you can not get through money/income as the money is 'invisible' to the community. Their interest is what they see and not what is at the bank which they may never know. Furthermore, Carter and May and others look at the type of the asset, particularly its ability to earn money. They look at household income as a reflector of the underlying assets. My interest in assets is, therefore, broader.

Indeed, in droughts and flood the rich and poor are affected, however, the poor may come out worse off.

- 3) **The author appears to conflate the notion of consensus-based approaches to poverty with the notion of an asset-based approach. She/he appears not to be aware that the arguments for these approaches are very different in nature.**

Consensual approach is a methodology towards what the threshold is. It can be used for both income and assets. People can vote for the amount that they think is a minimally acceptable amount to avoid poverty in the same way as it can be used to determine minimally adequate asset level which I postulate. Recall, there is the food basket methodology to find out how much money/income – threshold- is needed to escape poverty.

- 4) **The author does not discuss adequately what is involved in a consensus based approach. Aside from some general remarks about participatory approaches, the paper does not make any proposals as to how social consensus about poverty and asset thresholds can be uncovered – a central issue for this approach. In fact the proposed intensity scale appears simply to rely on the author's own judgement – a classic case of a subjective expert-derived threshold: the measure the author provides at the end is precisely *not* a social consensus-based approach.**

These concerns have been covered in addressing reviewer 1. The Consensual Approach has been described in the text and the Scaling of assets has been removed for further refinement (See my earlier comments in reviewer 1, quibble 4,).

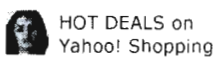
- 5) **The technical standard of the paper is not high. Referencing is arbitrary and inadequate for the most part (you cannot reference something by simply referring to 'internet!'). The table lumps together unspecified 'dominant income indices' and 'consensual approaches without any indication of what these mean, and without any references. There are significant stretches of the paper where the author simply recapitulates text-book standard descriptions of measures and approaches without any clarity as to why they are necessary in the text.**

Referencing has been improved. Some elaboration has been provided in the table for purposes of clarity. No references have been provided because these are my own words.

Sincerely yours

Author

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Re: Article: Poverty Diagnostic Model Friday, September 26, 2008 4:35 AM
From: "ann@isidelhi.org.in" <ann@isidelhi.org.in>
To: simbaomtपुरi@yahoo.com

Dear Mr. Oliver,

We are in receipt of your article, but would like to inform you that "Social Action" is a Thematic Journal and whenever there is space we include Non-Thematic articles. Since your article is a non-thematic it will take time before it is published.

Regards

Ann
Secretary
Social Action

On 24 Sep 2008 at 12:46, Oliver Mtapuri wrote:

I submitted my article for peer review titled "Poverty Diagnostic Model" on 5th February, 2008 in your journal "Social Action". To date, I have not had any feedback. Could you shed some light on its current status?

Kind regards

Oliver Mtapuri

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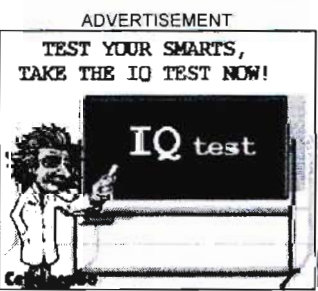
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From: Radhamany Sooryamoorthy
To: Mtapuri, Oliver
Date: 2/16/2006 9:03:00 AM
Subject: Acceptance

Dear Mr. Oliver Mtapuri:

This refers to your recent submission titled "The Missing Link: Asset-Based Measures of Poverty Towards Asset-Income Threshold and Networth Threshold."

Thanks for responding to our repeated queries.

We are glad to inform you that the paper has been accepted for publication in our journal. It will appear in the issue Vol. 19, No. 2 issue of the journal. Congratulations!!!

Regards

Editor

CC: lcsstvm@asianetindia.com; mkgsj@yahoo.com

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Africa Development, Vol. XXXIII, No. 3, 2008, pp. 35–54

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Exploring Local Conceptions of Poverty, Wealth and Well–Being: Field Evidence from Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe

Olivier Mtapuri*

Abstract

This article presents the conceptions of poverty by the poor in Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe. It seeks to broaden the discussion of poverty around the definition of the poor from the perspective of the poor. A cause-effect framework for poverty analysis is proposed, as well as the introduction of the notion of 'enclavity' within a family in poverty discourse. These are the two primary contributions of this paper. The research suggests that, due to deepening poverty, people create enclaves around husband/wife relationships as a new form of resilience/collectivity. While the poor suffer from a lack of assets, ethics and networks breakdown as a result of poverty. The results suggest, as elsewhere, that poverty is multifaceted, thus driving to some confluence of conception.

The truth is that there are many causes of rural poverty; that it is difficult to judge to what extent one or more may be primary; that the balance of their significance varies over time, by season, and by country, region, community, village, household and individual; and that not only causes of poverty, but also opportunities for wealth, are points of departure for rural development. Chambers (1990:3):

Résumé

(A traduire)

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E-mail: simbaomtapuri@yahoo.com

Review of “Exploring Local Conceptions of Poverty, Wealth and Well-Being: Field Evidence from Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe.” (Submitted for publication in *Africa Development*)

Recommendation: Revise and resubmit for publication (Publish pending revisions)

This article examines conceptions of poverty, wealth, and well-being in a rural area 40 km outside Harare. The aim of the article is to show that poverty is “multi-pronged” and to investigate poor people’s understandings of poverty, a perspective that has been ignored in much poverty research. The author aims to address this gap and to create a set of conceptual tools for research and rural development work. The author adopts a thorough and original scholarly approach to an important and timely topic and the data is presented in an accessible manner. This reviewer feels that the paper would benefit from revision but would like to recommend the paper for publication pending these changes.

On page 4, the author lists five objectives of the paper: “explor[ing] local conceptions of poverty”, “establish[ing] poverty typologies,” “identify[ing]...assets...for use in the development of a poverty index...,” “investigat[ing] how formal and informal, relational and socially mediated mechanisms work for the poor,” and “identify[ing] interventions for poverty alleviation”. It is the opinion of this review that the author is most successful in achieving the first two of these objectives. A strength of the article is the rich qualitative and ethnographic data in the form of excerpted interviews and focus groups transcripts. The author is clear and grounds the article in relevant literature. The links between data and the author’s conclusions regarding local conceptions of poverty, well-being, and assets are made easily accessible to the reader as are the poverty types.

This reviewer suggests certain revisions prior to the publication of this article. Primarily, I would ask the author to better integrate the data, theory, and analysis, a process that may require revising the structure of the article. As it stands, the author lists and summarizes a number of works on poverty, then presents the objectives and methods of the study, then presents the data and then conclusions. The work of connecting the reviewed literature to the data to the conclusions is largely left to the reader. I appreciated the clarity with which the main intervention of the article is presented (“Poverty research needs to address the rich-poor conceptual schism because of the differences in meaning that different people attach to these conceptions, especially the rich and the poor.”) but would have preferred it if the elements of the article (literature, objectives/methods, data, conclusions) were more integrated. It would be helpful if the author explicitly connected his or her work to other work in poverty studies. How does this article draw from or challenge other work in this area? How does the data support or challenge this research? How does the data support the conclusions drawn by the author?

In the data section of the article, the author presents many excerpts from interviews and focus groups, including long informant quotes. While the data is compelling, I would ask that the author not rely on the data to 'speak for itself'. The significance of the data should be made clear to the reader, as it is in the beginning of the section on "Defining a poor person" with the quotes from "a thirty year old woman," Jessica, Bindu, Tracy, and Nyembesi (pp. 6-7). In other sections, however, the data overwhelms the analysis: it is not clear, for instance, how the quote from Munemo (8) relates to the previous quotation or to the analysis that follows it. In some cases, the data might be edited to avoid repetition; alternately that repetition might be highlighted as indicative of key elements or themes. This is also true of the model of causes and effects of poverty (figure 1), which might benefit from more thorough explanation and from a clarification of whether it maps informants' conceptions or the author's conclusions.

In addition, while the author successfully shows how local conceptions of wealth and assets emerge from the data and how these conceptions can be put to work in the development of poverty typologies and indices, it is less clear to this reader how the author addresses objectives numbers 4 and 5. It is not clear what it means to examine how "formal, informal, relational and socially-mediated mechanisms work for the poor." It seems that this is related to the analysis of "coping mechanisms" on pages 22 and 23. The point about the uselessness of NGOs and government aid to those who do not fall into the target groups (widows and children) is provocative and could be expanded. In sum, the author may need to be more explicit in connecting this objective to the analysis, and to providing a richer analysis of how informants use or do not use these mechanisms, in what circumstances, and under what limitations. It is also not clear that the author obtains the objective of identifying interventions; while the author clearly engages with a set of conceptual and analytical tools, the recommendations (eg. "properly manage economy wide shocks given their negative impact on the livelihoods of the poor," "enhance the capacity and capabilities of the poor to accumulate assets," "affirmative wealth creating investment aimed at the local level") seem somewhat vague. If the author wishes to recommend for interventions, the reviewer would suggest something more substantive and specific to Mashonaland West. On the other hand, it is not clear to this reviewer that including recommendations or interventions is necessary. It might be possible to leave the general comments while removing "identify interventions" from the list of objectives.

In the treatment of "vice" and "ethics and networks," more data is needed. This is particularly true regarding the purported links between "vice" and poverty (since the link between vice and poverty is a common element of stereotypes of the poor). Clarification would also help since it is not clear whether the author is suggesting an empirical link between them or a conceptual link made by his or her informants. Likewise, the connections made between a breakdown or shift in ethical values, increased social isolation, and poverty are suggestive but, again, it is hard to evaluate these claims from the data presented here.

Given the current economic context of Zimbabwe and the author's claims that the poor identify "the economy" as a component or cause of poverty, the author might

provide more information about the economy at the macro level and how these informants' lives are impacted by it. I imagine that many readers might appreciate and be interested in an explanation of how inhabitants of Mashonaland West experience "the economy".

Finally, while the article is well-written and clear, it would be helpful to have more consistency (eg. in the informant descriptions that accompany quotations) and, occasionally, clarity of writing. For example, it is not clear to this reader whether "multi-pronged" poverty refers to the causes, effects, or conceptualizations of poverty; while "prong" suggests cause-effect relationships, perhaps multi-faceted or a similar term might be more encompassing?

In conclusion, I believe that some revisions (such as those suggested here) will strengthen the article, but find it to be a rich and analytically engaging piece of writing.

MY RESPONSES

21 June 2008

To: Editor

Many thanks to you and the reviewers for the insightful comments on the Paper:
Exploring local conceptions of poverty, wealth and well – being: Field evidence from Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe.

Below are my responses to the comments raised by reviewer 1.

Reviewer 1

- I. I deleted objectives 3, 4 and 5 and retained 1 and 2 as recommended.
- II. I attempted to integrate as much as possible the theory and analysis without losing the essence of the lived experiences.
- III. The framework I propose in the paper was inspired by the informants' conceptions of poverty. I would rather consider it to be an empirical framework.
- IV. There is an empirical link between vice and poverty which enabled me to hazard the conclusion that poverty may cause people to engage in vice.
- V. Multi-pronged and multi-faceted: The causes of poverty are multi-pronged because multiple things make people poor. But poverty itself is multi-faceted (not pronged) as you rightly corrected me.

**“Exploring Local Conceptions of Poverty, Wealth and Well-Being:
Field Evidence from Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe” --
submitted for publication in *Africa Development*, CODESRIA**

Recommendation: Resubmit, requires major revisions

Comments:

The essay, “Exploring Local Conceptions of Poverty, Wealth and Well-Being: Field Evidence from Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe”, primarily examines conceptions of poverty expressed by residents of Zimbabwe’s Mashonaland West province. The article reports the findings of a study conducted in December 2006 and January 2007 that focused on definitions of wealth and poverty as well as causes and consequences of poverty for villagers in the province. It is clear that a wealth of thought-provoking materials was gleaned in interviews undertaken during the study. Yet, the essay reads like a descriptive report of findings, largely via banks of quotations. What is the argument, the thesis of the article? What is the argument in the context of studies of poverty? It is the argument of the article that must be clearly explained in the introduction, not the objectives of the two month study. The objectives/results of the study may be too extensive for a twenty-five page essay and better explored in a book-length project. Narrowing down the topic for critical analysis is crucial at this stage. The article offers an enticing entrée into an important subject-matter for analysis: conceptualizing poverty in rural Zimbabwe during a period of economic instability. With major revisions, this article can provide insight, analytical depth, and critical commentary on the vital subject of livelihoods, struggles and strategies in contemporary economic contexts. This article has great potential and warrants development and resubmission to *Africa Development*.

The article provides important insight into the dynamics of subsistence and struggle at a time when the economy of Zimbabwe is under significant stress, and the essay is therefore an important contribution to a greater understanding of contemporary livelihood struggles in rural Zimbabwe. However, the broader politico-economic context is not addressed for reasons that are unclear. Incorporating the political-economic context would help to position the essay not only with respect to studies of poverty, but also within the realm of sociological/anthropological studies dedicated to understanding people’s lived experiences and the categories/conceptualizations which people hold, deploy, etc. in order to make sense of a changing world and one’s place in it. The author(s) represents respondents’ explanations of poverty in their own words with ‘folk models’ rather than abstracted, comparative models like the MDGs. In this vein, it also makes sense that such conceptualizations are intimately linked to understandings of

broader temporal and spatial contexts that change over time. Hence, socio-economic/political contexts are crucial for making convincing arguments about cultural explanations and conceptualizations.

In the study of how people, who are ostensibly poor, self-identify, there is a contradiction in that the bulk of the data obfuscates identity in sociological context. The data consist of a series of quotes attributed by name, gender, age, perhaps marriage status, perhaps number of children. The author(s) then parenthetically states that socio-economic exclusion is not discussed in the paper (16). However, critical analysis of how people self-identify would demand explanation of the 'who' –otherwise it defeats the purpose of recognizing 'the poor' as human, as more than an abstracted category. If this direction of analysis is unintended, then the essay needs to develop along another path.

Recommended areas of revision:

1. Introduction: The introduction is too generalized in its focus on 'poverty'. Be specific about the theoretical perspectives that are being criticized as well as the reasons for such criticism in relation to a stated argument.

2. Methodology: Be succinct in explaining the methodology and selective in relaying what is relevant for this essay. As it stands, the methodology is unclear. Surveys and interviews are different research tools and produce different kinds of data. The author(s) states, "The survey is, in essence, qualitative in nature" (4). However, surveys are quantitative research instruments. If the author(s) relies on interviews which are qualitative methods, then be clear in the description.

3. Causes of poverty: It is interesting that theft is conveyed as a cause of poverty, and yet there is no discussion of broader social issues... why? Is it the author's silence or the respondents' silence? Is it a silence for reasons of censorship, self or otherwise? It is important to address, even creatively. It occurs to me that a discussion of causes of poverty in itself could be the focus of the article. While the preceding sections of definitional quotes fall well within parameters of academic literature about southern Africa, the emphasis on theft, as well as other causes of poverty, is intriguing. Here is something new to be explored and explained—probably in terms of broader political/economic contexts. Check the anthropological/sociological literature for the region on definitions/conceptualizations of poverty expressed by people themselves. This literature may offer a longitudinal framework for analyzing how such conceptualizations have changed over time, or not.

4. The essay requires careful editing using CODESRIA's style manual. There are errors of grammar, spelling and punctuation.

MY RESPONSES

21 June 2008

To: Editor

Many thanks to you and the reviewers for the insightful comments on the Paper:
Exploring local conceptions of poverty, wealth and well – being: Field evidence from Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe.

Below are my responses to the comments raised by reviewer 2.

Reviewer 2

- I. I clarified my thesis in the introduction. Indeed, all I am doing in this paper is describing how people experience poverty as they steal from the powerless and vulnerable and I also attempt to provide insights into contemporary livelihoods and bread and butter struggles of villagers in Mashonaland West through an analytical discussion.
- II. I have added a short paragraph on the economy of Zimbabwe to provide the context at the time of the survey. I have excluded the political context in self censorship as it is not my domain.
- III. As per your suggestion, I will take up this work as a longitudinal research to observe the dynamics of the conceptions over time.



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Journal of International Development - Decision on Manuscript ID JID-07-0005.R3 | Tuesday, July 29, 2008 10:27 AM

From: "jidjournal@hotmail.co.uk" <jidjournal@hotmail.co.uk>
To: simbaontapuri@yahoo.com, 204511655@ukzn.ac.za

29-Jul-2008

Dear Mr Mtapuri,

Manuscript ID JID-07-0005.R3 entitled "Developing an asset threshold using the Consensual Approach: Results from Mashonaland West, Zimbabwe" which you submitted to Journal of International Development, has been reviewed. The comments of the referee(s) are included at the bottom of this letter.

The referee(s) have recommended publication, but also suggest some minor revisions to your manuscript. Therefore, I invite you to respond to the referee(s)' comments and revise your manuscript.

You can upload your revised manuscript and submit it through your Author Center, you into <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav> and enter your Author Center, where you will find your manuscript ID listed under "Manuscripts with Decisions".

When submitting your revised manuscript, you will be able to respond to the comments made by the referee(s) in the space provided. You can use this space to document any changes you make to the original manuscript.

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Once again, thank you for submitting your manuscript to Journal of International Development. I look forward to receiving your revision.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Paul Mosley
Journal of International Development
p.mosley@sagepub.com

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From: "Kally" <kallyeditor@icon.co.zw> [mailto:kallyeditor@icon.co.zw]

To: "Oliver Mtepe" <simbaombapond@yahoo.com>

Subject: Re: Article: Social Dialogue in Zimbabwe

Date: Thu, 5 Oct 2006 11:51:50 +0200

Hi Oliver

Your article will be published in the next Labour Bulletin in two weeks time. I hope you are not disappointed as I had to cut it back a lot due to lack of space in the Bulletin. Do you subscribe to the Bulletin? If not please send me your address so we can send you a copy. Thanks Kally

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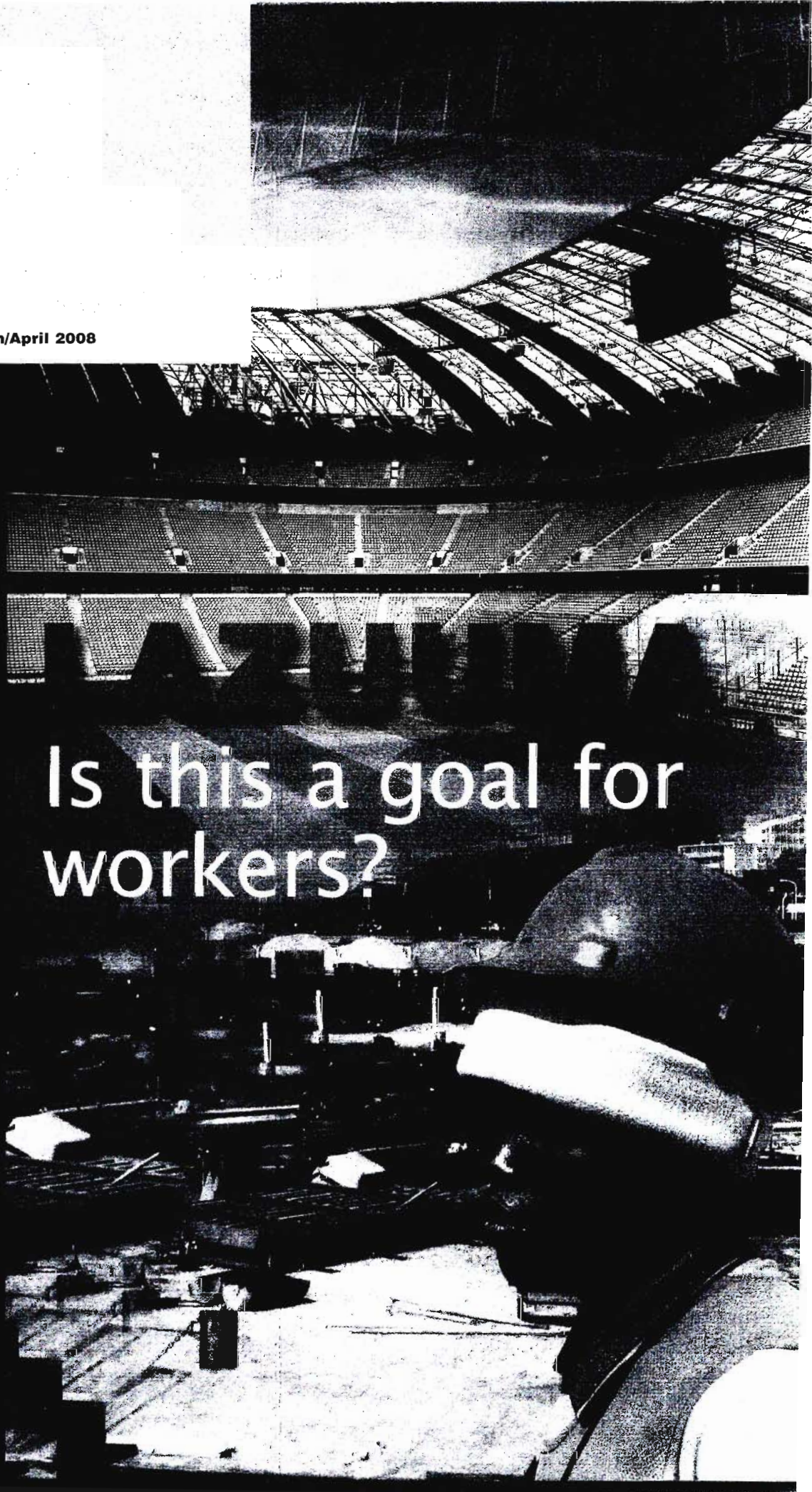
Can we
win the
battle for
Polokwane?

Is this
a
goal for BEE

Is this
of the political
elite?

Is this
to John
Gomomo

Is this a goal for
workers?



The South African Labour Bulletin's mission is to:

- provide information and stimulate critical analysis and debate on issues and challenges that confront workers, their organisations and their communities, and
- communicate this in an accessible and engaging manner.

In so doing the SALB hopes to advance the discourse of progressive politics, promote social justice and the interests of the working class.

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