



Establishment and Operation of a Poverty Observatory in the Republic of Mauritius

Final Report



June 2010

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After a preliminary study on qualitative methodology on Poverty in Mauritius carried out by the Decentralised Cooperation Programme of the European Union and a workshop with various stakeholders in the social and poverty field there was a call for proposal in December 2008 inviting submissions of projects for the operation of a Poverty Observatory in the Republic of Mauritius.

The bid for this exercise was won by the Mauritius Council for this project. An official contract was signed between the two parties in April 2008. The Poverty Observatory operated for a period of ten months

The Poverty Observatory project was carried out in partnership with the Mauritius Council of Social Services. The Poverty Observatory was set up to act as a platform for advocacy, for various stakeholders to interact and influence policy making in the poverty field.

The aim of the Poverty Observatory was to carry out qualitative research. However, quantitative information was used as background to carry out the qualitative study. The major distinction of the poverty observatory methodology was that there would be no repetition of findings as in most of the previous studies carried out. This method was chosen as it was different to other methods on which previous studies were carried out. While a first round of implementation was carried out in 2008 with in depth interviews and focus group discussions this was not the case for the Poverty Observatory because of time constraint. Thus, only in depth interviews were carried out in specific regions identified from data of the Central Statistical Office. These regions were said to have a low RDI or Relative Development Index. Interviews were carried out in the four parts of Mauritius in regions classified as poor.

Based on theories on poverty and poverty related issues two Mauritian definitions have been tentatively brought up.

The aim of research carried out by the Poverty Observatory can be divided into two stems which are:

- (a) Assess the extent of poverty
- (b) Examine how poverty affects these poor people in relation to many factors.

Poverty was seen as a social phenomenon. In this way the life experience of those living in poverty was captured.

Both the qualitative and quantitative methods were used to analyse information. Findings show that there has been improvement in some respects. For instance, satisfaction has even been noted in relation to health. However, it has been found that other variables such as education, nutrition, infrastructure, income, gender and access to services contributes towards poverty.

Moreover, though there has been development in the last few years on one side the other side shows there is still room for improvement though we have achieved most of the millennium development goals.

But in the long run we can expect that absolute poverty can be eradicated if resources are properly channeled. Efforts must also be carried out to bring down the level of relative poverty.

Introduction

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Following a call for proposal in December 2008 by the Decentralised Cooperation Programme for a poverty observatory, the Mauritius Research Council won the bid for this exercise. An official contract was officially signed in April 2009 between the Decentralised Cooperation Programme of the European Union and the Mauritius Research Council for the project entitled "Establishment and Operation of a Poverty Observatory in the Republic of Mauritius."

Initially funded by the Decentralised Cooperation Programme of the European Union in its first year of operation it was carried out in partnership with the Mauritius Council of Social Services.

The Poverty Observatory started its operation in June 2009 with the recruitment of the project officer. In late August 2009 the Project Coordinator was recruited. Therefore the Poverty Observatory became fully operational in August 2009 after 4 months. Project was carried out for 10 month that is from June 2008-March 2010.

1.1 *The Poverty Observatory*

The need for a Poverty Observatory was felt because all studies that were previously carried out on specific poverty issues tended to address particularities or specificities. As such, in most of them there was a lack of cohesion such that they fail to really address poverty or the problems associated with poverty.

The Poverty Observatory was created with the required infrastructure and expertise to create and implement a constant as well as a reliable system of monitoring the ever changing social and economic situation of those who live in poverty. Such an institution was meant to provide implementation of consistent and singularly immediate plural studies. The methodologies adopted was perceived as critical to fully monitor the life experiences and opportunities of the poor as the economic parameters influencing poverty issues are said to be highly fluid and volatile. That is, the situation of the poor or those who are potentially poor can change rapidly and frequently due to, influenced by, or related to both minor and major events driven by the local, and the international social ,economic and political situation at any given point in time.

The Poverty Observatory will be an institution that will not only observe but also implement action research. Results obtained would be used for advocacy and stimulate changes in order to improve the life conditions of the poor. In principle, the poverty observatory was not meant to operate as a body that collates available details to repackage them into ineffective publications.

The Poverty Observatory was set up to implement studies on poverty using predominantly but not exclusively qualitative research methods. Initially, the objectives were as follows:

- (i). To provide a more exact picture of the situation of poor people.
- (ii). To stimulate action to address the main issues of poverty in the country
- (iii). To make recommendations on what type of action might be advisable.

Basically therefore the Poverty Observatory would act as a focal point focusing on specific local concerns. It was meant to act both as an agent for advocacy and as an advisor to the government.

However in August 2009 with the constitution of the Project Implementation Committee the initial objectives were reviewed and they were redefined in the ways mentioned below:

- (i). To Measure the effects of poverty using participative action research
- (ii). Advocate on behalf of the poor
- (iii). Analyse available data related to poverty
- (iv). Liaise with and informally monitor the performance of organization involved with the alleviation of poverty through discussions with the intended beneficiaries
- (v). To widely disseminate the findings of these activities.

Figure 1: Activities and Results of the Poverty Observatory

The Activities of the Poverty Observatory was described as follows:

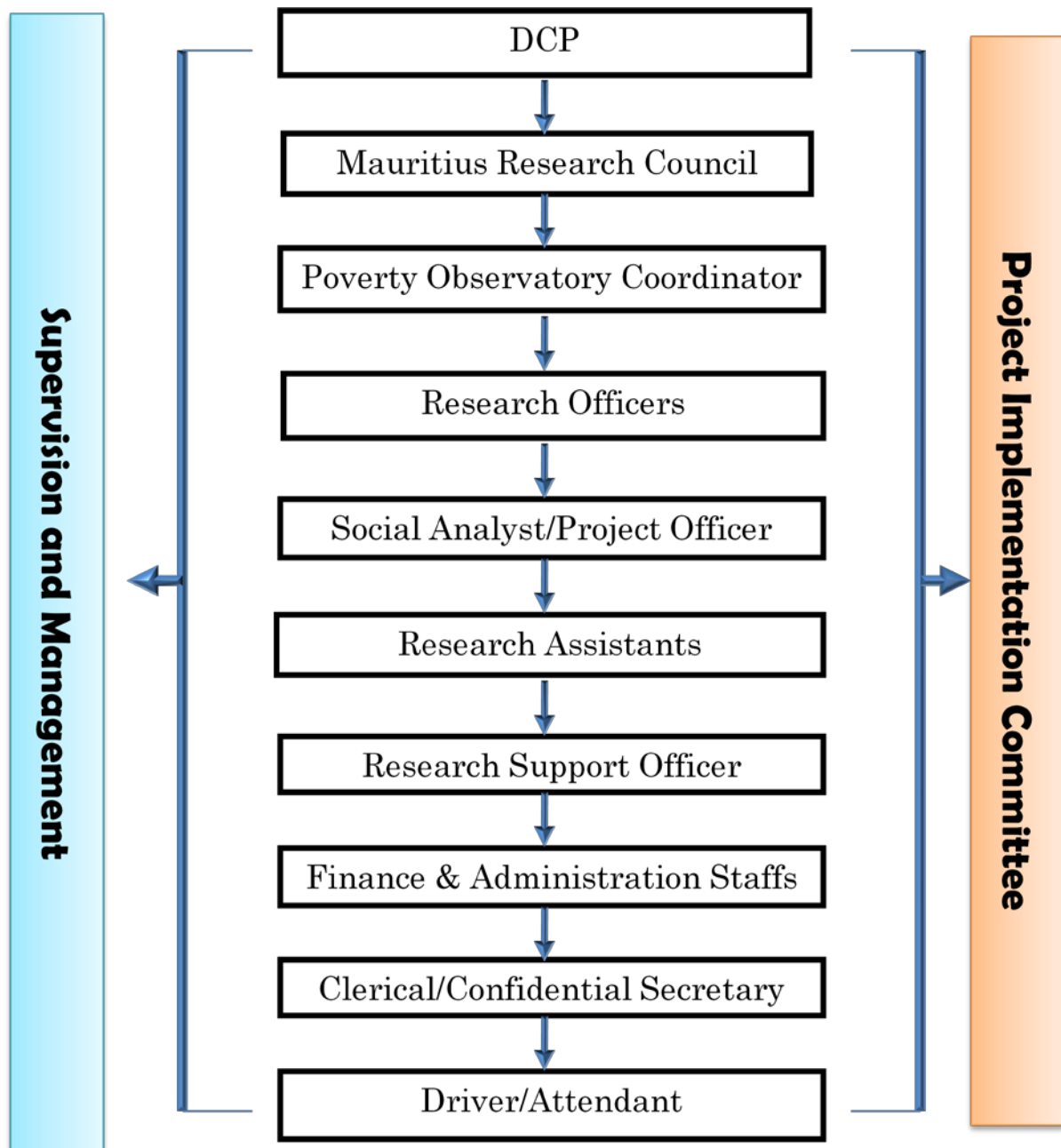
- Data mining
- Statistical analysis
- Interaction with data collection agencies, organizations and individuals
- Research monitoring
- Report assessment
- Re-analysis and re-interpretation of data in published reports
- Key informant interviews with agencies, organizations and individuals

The Results of the Poverty Observatory were described as follows

- Regular schedule situational analysis reports (quarterly, annually)
- Intermittent short reports on topical events or observed newly emerging trends
- Indications of wider research opportunities where noted
- Briefing papers and articles
- To contribute to relevant policy input through attendance at workshops, conferences or policy planning meetings

Adapted from DCP Report October 2008, Pg 41.

Figure 2: The staffing structure of the Poverty Observatory



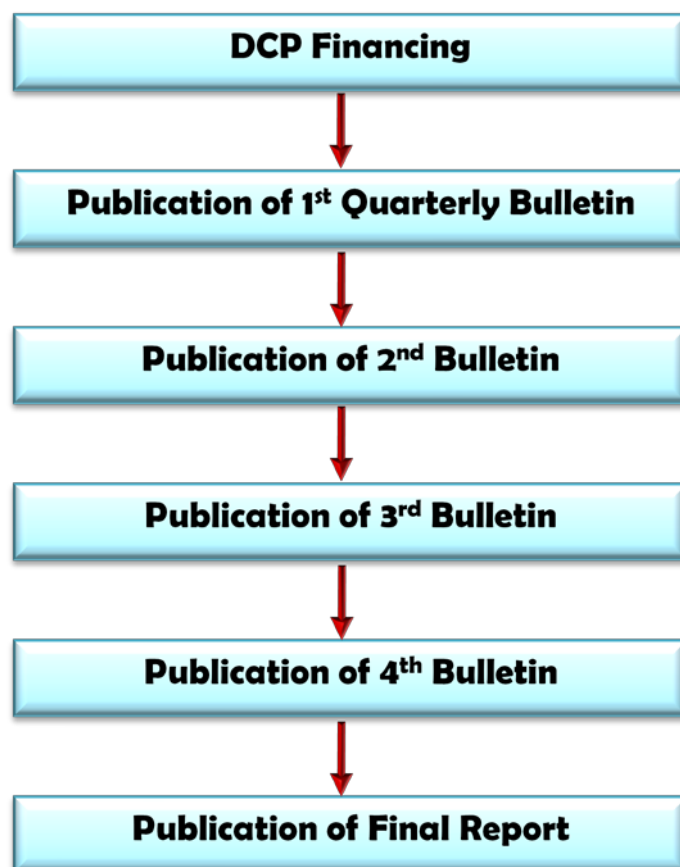
The diagram shows the staffing structure of the Poverty Observatory including the informal structure through which it operated. This includes the in-kind contribution in terms of research expertise, finance, administrative and other staff which supported the day to day running of the poverty Observatory.

A Project Implementation committee was set up to manage this project comprising members who are from key organizations. The project implementation committee consisted of the following members.

Table 1: The project implementation committee

Name of Person	Organisation	Post Held
Professor S.Jugessur	Mauritius Research Council	Chairman
Dr A.Suddhoo	Mauritius Research Council	Executive Director
External		
Mr F.Fatadin	Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, Senior Citizens Welfare and Reform Institutions	Commissioner
Ms Y.Cassimally	Central Statistical Office	Director
Dr(Mrs) S.Bunwaree	Institute of Peace and Development	Member
Dr (Mrs) U. Bhowon	University of Mauritius	Associate Professor
Ms S.Ramessur	University of Technology	Senior Lecturer
Mr JNMownah	Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment	Team Analyst
Mr H.Ramgobin	Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, Senior Citizens Welfare and Reform Institutions Probation office	Principal Probation Officer
Mr R.Nookadee	Mauritius Council of Social Services	Secretary
Internal		
In attendance		
Mr N.Richards	Mauritius Research Council	Poverty Observatory Coordinator
Dr H.Neeliah	Mauritius Research Council	Research Officer
Mr A.Peedolly	Mauritius Research Council	Research Officer
Ms K.Bheenick	Mauritius Research Council	Project Officer/Social Analyst for Poverty Observatory(Secretary)

Figure 3: The time table of the activities of the Poverty Observatory was described in the following way



1.2 Background

When the Poverty Observatory started its operation some alterations were carried out. Given that there was time constraint implementation was carried out on a small scale concentrating on a few aspects related to poverty and poverty related issues. Some of the topics were quite similar to those dealt with under the first round of implementation. This was because rapid results could be generated.

Table 2: The time table for the poverty observatory was as follows

Period	Activities Undertaken
June 2009-March 2010	Review of literatures Analysis of Reports Field work exercise
November 2009	Visit of PO Coordinator, Manchester, United Kingdom Publication of 1 st Bulletin
February 2010	Visit of PO Coordinator to Rodrigues
March 2010	Publication of 2 nd Bulletin.
April 2010	Publication of 3 rd , 4 th Bulletins and Final Reports.

A review of selected reports¹ was carried out which in the following section will be analysed by themes.

1.3 Definition of the Poor

According to the Statistical Report (2006-2007 & 2010) a household is considered to be poor if the income threshold falls below the minimum threshold of the Poverty Line. The Poverty line can be an absolute poverty line which is the cost of basic needs in terms of food, housing, clothing and other essentials which is referred to as the minimum vital. On an international level a poverty line of \$1 per person has been developed by the World Bank in 1985 in order to assess and monitor global poverty. This was reevaluated to \$1.08 in 1993 and incorporated in the Millenium Development Goal. In 2005 this was recalibrated to \$1.25 based on new data on purchasing power parity compiled by the International Comparison Program. (CSO Report, 2010, Pg 13)

¹ Many more Poverty-related studies have been carried out. Their references are found in Appendix I.

A relative poverty line on the other side defined as half the median household income adjusted for the relative size, age composition and economies of scale. Using this line, a 1- person household was found to be poor if its income resources fell below Rs2,804 in 2001-2002 and Rs3,821 in 2006/2007 (CSO Report, 2010, Pg 14).

This is the generally accepted measure which most studies on poverty have used. In contrast, to this purely quantitative measure the Poverty Observatory has brought about two Mauritian definitions of poverty.

1.4 Mauritian Definition of Poverty

Based on many typical definitions of poverty the PO has tried to define poverty in the Mauritian context which are

- (1) Poverty is the lack of access to basic needs and services or the reality that one's household has less social facilities than is the locally accepted minimal social norm".
- (2) Poverty is the plight of the unfortunate. Poverty can be defined as tragic state of vulnerability experienced by those who live in a state of destitution and deprivation due to too little food, lack of access to basic needs and services. Poverty is characterized by an absence of livelihoods, inability to sustain children in schools, substandard housing that the poor have in comparison to the locally accepted social norm. In short, it is a blow against human dignity".

Literature Review

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW OF SELECTED POVERTY-RELATED STUDIES

This chapter carries selected summarises and observations made on existing literatures dealing with Poverty & Poverty-related issues.

Source: Lau Thi Keng J.C (1997),” *Etude Multidisciplinaire Sur L’exclusion à Maurice*” Government Printer.’

Background

Mauritius has achieved tremendous economic progress yet the fruits of this development have not been evenly distributed among sections of the population. In this article, it was predicted that erosion of preferences would lead to the closing down of factories. There will be unemployment. In the recent years, this has already occurred such that some people are facing poverty. It is therefore imperative to study the link between poverty and exclusion.

Poverty can lead to exclusion. Exclusion does not occur due to financial difficulties or constraints rather other factors such as historical set up can lead to exclusion. Exclusion occurs when social links are severed, it is the feeling of being left out; there is inability of taking charge of one’s life whereas poverty is concerned with economic disadvantages. This study will try to establish the link between poverty and exclusion.

Objectives of the Study

This article focused on factors responsible for exclusion among which one of them is poverty. He concluded that a careful analysis of the integrating structures and institutions must be carried out if one wants to look at factors responsible for poverty and exclusion.

It is to be noted that one may be excluded without being poor or one may be poor and not excluded. However, the probability of being excluded is much greater when one is already facing conditions of poverty. Problems such as unemployment, lack of education, poor health, poor

housing, belonging to a geographical area which is regarded on the periphery and regarded as deprived can push people into poverty. This study attempted to look at these factors responsible for poverty and exclusion.

Methodology

Qualitative method of study was used to look at factors responsible for the exclusion of certain groups. One of them is inevitably poverty.

Here exclusion was not viewed separately rather it can be seen within panoply of discipline (psychology, sociology, linguistics and history). Multidisciplinary approach has been adopted to phrase out the problem. Each researcher has analysed data through his/her experience.

Lau Thi Keng (1997, Pg 8) researched on factors responsible for excluding groups from the perspective of inadequacy in social integration mechanism. He concluded that careful analysis of integrating structures and institutions must be carried out to understand why structures are unable to fulfill their role.

He warns against adopting a geographical targeted approach in the combat against exclusion since all inhabitants of poor regions are not necessarily poor.

Lau Thi Keng (1997) focuses more on citizenship and other differences such as cultural differences to explain the phenomenon of exclusion.

Data collection – The two phases

Data collection has been achieved in two phases. A first phase was carried out with the objective of having a more comprehensive view of exclusion and to analyse the links between the economic, education, cultural, linguistics, historical and geographical aspects. In the second phase, quantitative data has been collected to either validate or invalidate some of the results of qualitative data.

Qualitative data has been collected through individual non-structured and semi-structured interviews and through group discussions. In non –structured interviews, the interviewee was given only start up question and he/she was free to answer. Interviewees were free to choose

the structure of their opinions and views. The interviewer's role was limited to facilitation. Semi structured interviews are structured in such a way that interviewee has to go to number of certain subtopics and interview grid but inside each subtopic the interviewee is free to answer the way he/she wants. Those two techniques have been used in order to perceive and feel exclusion. Afterwards, focus group discussions have been used to obtain precise and focussed qualitative information. With focus group discussion individual and perception logic is highlighted. In this way, data about different grids and logics interaction can be gathered. Focus group discussions have been carried out with members of the same family. Due to same gender there is better understanding of different interpretative schemes. Interviewees were chosen from four regions namely: Roche Bois, Vallée Pitot, Tranquebar and Bambous. These regions have been selected to obtain the best possible sociological characteristics on cultural practices, religious beliefs, rural and urban characteristics. Respondents were from different age groups. Additional funds were undertaken in other regions with those appearing on "Trust Fund pour la Lutte contre L'exclusion." However, selected interviewees selection region need not be statistically representative of the population. The aim of the qualitative analysis was to obtain and develop a comprehensive and interpretative general structure. Selected region and interviewees need to be independent in their real statistical weight. Here the emphasis is laid mostly on mechanisms which brought about the extreme situation.

Limitations of the Study

- Those who carried out the fieldwork were inadequately trained.

Salient Findings

- Both poverty and exclusion should be analysed in terms of income, consumption, access to services to obtain better results.
- It can be seen that certain institutions have failed to carry out their role; this gives rise to poverty which can lead to exclusion. For example, school that are supposed to provide an avenue for social mobility can exclude people who are unable to compete on equal footing.
- To address poverty problem quality of infrastructure should be the same in all regions for example, there should not be marked differences in rural and urban areas.

- Exclusion prevails within social class, the social strata is likely to discontinue with poverty. For example, within an economic crisis situation it is the most vulnerable who are excluded.

Background

According to studies conducted, it has been found that burden of poverty falls on women disproportionately. This study therefore urges the international community to conduct research to discover the causes, effects and cures for feminisation of poverty.

Furthermore, several studies have often discussed poverty in Mauritius without mentioning the effects it has on women. This study attempts to discuss how growing poverty influences women and how it affects their health, education and labour activities. In previous studies carried out these have not been addressed in a comprehensive manner.

It is to be noted that legal reforms in the country together with project like entrepreneurship development and micro credit schemes have enhanced women's productive resources and their ability however, poverty still prevails. This represents a challenge for all those working in the field of women, as there is no data and no indicators on gender and poverty in Mauritius. .

Data profiles generated from the study will interest donors, NGO's and international financial institutions which are working on gender and poverty. The results will also have significant implication for both poverty analysis and poverty interventions.

Objective of the study

The objective of this study seeks to establish patterns and trends of feminisation of poverty. There is no statistical information on the reality of gender bias in Mauritius in the field of poverty. Moreover, there is no solid evidence to support the view that women are disproportionately represented among the poor. Anti poverty programmes can work at the detriment of women based on untested assumption. For example, there has been no differentiation on the use of household and "household members " as a unit of analysis in other studies as such this has a negative impact on women due to this inadequate definition. There

are gender differences in intra household allocation of production and consumption in this study. For this study missing disaggregated data has been compiled.

Up to now both the CSO and the Ministry of Women's Rights have produced disaggregated data for socio economic indicators however, no in depth analysis have been carried out afterwards. Additional gender disaggregated data is therefore required to capture relative poverty faced by women in a comprehensive manner.

Methodology

Study can be described in two parts. Firstly an analysis of gender-disaggregated data has been undertaken to establish patterns and trends of feminisation of poverty both in Mauritius and Rodrigues. Missing disaggregated data relevant to achieve the objective set was identified.

Second part of the study presented the main findings from focus group discussions and semi – structured interviews conducted among poor women and men living in deprived areas. In the study Tranquebar and Anse Jonchée were designated.

Findings presented have been obtained through:

- (a) Desk Research
- (b) Focus group discussions /semi-structured interviews
- (c) Qualitative Interviews

Desk Research

Extensive desk research was carried out to understand the current situation of Poverty in Mauritius and more specifically, current situation. Gender disaggregated data were obtained from CSO publication on various social, demographic and economic indicators.

Focus Group Discussions

Second part of the study focus group consisted of focus group discussion interviews were carried out in Kreol.

Identification of areas

Due to financial consideration two regions were chosen one rural and one urban from a master list from the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Group. This was used as a more reliable measure than Relative Development Index.

Identification of participant profile for group discussion

Both men and women were consulted for this study. Dimensions in another studies show that female-headed household are overrepresented among the poor than male- headed household.

The approach

Participatory approach was adopted for focus group discussions. Participants could define poverty using their own criteria.

This approach provided a micro level perspective of poor women's experience of poverty and their response to it.

Qualitative interviews

Face to face interviews were carried out with key stakeholders in the country who are;

- (a) Officials from the Ministry of Women as well as other relevant ministries
- (b) Officials from the Central Statistical Office.
- (c) Sociologists
- (d) Representatives of UN agencies.

In this study poverty is examined both in terms of income poverty and human poverty. It takes into account access to services such as education, health and nutrition, employment opportunities, access to resources and services. With this approach gender biases are more likely to surface.

Poverty was investigated in terms of absolute poverty as defined by the World Bank – using proportion poor female, female- headed household and also relative to their counterparts. Poverty threshold using P. Valenti and A. Duncan was adopted. Intra household allocation of income was used. Incidence of poverty of one group of individuals /household relative to another group was further used.

Assumptions on which this study was based are:

- (1) Whether female -headed household (FHH) are more vulnerable to poverty than male-headed household, it seeks to find out if women are over represented among the poor. This establishes the shape of poverty faced by women in comparison to men.
- (2) Whether female are at a disadvantage with regard to key well being indicators, security, employment, earnings, education, health and participation in governance and leadership.
- (3) If female elderly were more vulnerable than male counterparts?

Salient Findings

- Average, mode, median income for female headed household are less than male counterparts in both Mauritius and Rodrigues.
- There is an overrepresentation of female- headed household in low income category compared to their total population.
- In Rodrigues, this problem is exacerbated given there are few employment opportunities for women on the island. (Common Country Assessment Household.)
- In Mauritius even the decile of monthly income is less for women.
- Incidence of poverty among Female headed household is less than their male counterparts.
- The proportion of employed male heads of households is twice the proportion of employed women. Women who were widowed, separated, divorced were more vulnerable that they had to resort to multiple livelihood strategies. Their low educational level can explain low employability of women.
- Female head of household are over- represented among social aid representatives and female derive their income from pensions.

- Though GDI is high there are wide gender disparities. Women suffer from economic independence.
- There are wide gender gaps in unemployment rates in Mauritius.
- Incidence of long- term unemployment is higher among female population. While gender gaps in absolute terms has widened in favour of males in 1991-1993 this figure has risen for male and female, which is a cause for concern.
- Women are less likely to find a job in short lapse of time than men.
- Increased women in the labour market does not necessarily mean better health status of women
- Males are employed in senior positions than females.
- Trade offs in unpaid jobs affects more women however; more in depth quantitative data over time on time allocation of female & male is required to establish changes in gender equality.
- Poor women have less access to health care. For example, women from socio-economic profiles gave birth to low weight babies.
- With poverty and lack of information women had to resort backstreet abortion.
- Among a total of 1800 small and medium enterprises registered at SMIDO only 141 are run by women.

Limitations of the study

- (i) Intra household inequalities in resource distribution and other institutional basis imply that at household level, income and consumption measures is not a good indicator of women's well being.
- (ii) Female- headed household may represent a positive choice. Thus, connotations of powerlessness and victimhood associated with Female headed household are bias. It is important to understand the process through which households are constituted (teenage pregnancy, informal unions, widowhood, divorce and desertion).

Analysis and Recommendations

- In this study poverty has been examined both in terms of income poverty and human poverty. Moreover, as access to different services has been considered this provides a clear picture of poverty among women.
- Access to services and consumption within the household has also been considered. This indicates notion of power within the household. This can be helpful to policy and decision makers in the event of policy formulation targeted towards women.
- This study complements other studies which have been carried out on poverty and given that disaggregated data was provided these statistics can be useful.
- As participants were able to define poverty using their own definitions this was useful in qualitative study. Life experiences of women could be captured.
- It is to be noted that study was carried out in September 2001, since then women's situation has changed. Thus these figures need to be updated.
- Given that the National Women Entrepreneur Council has been created it would be interesting how many women entrepreneurs have benefited from NWECC grants and able to sustain comparison to men.
- Given that there were financial constraints two regions were chosen however in the event of another study more regions can be chosen to have a bigger sample and a better analysis.

Background

Most recent data published by World Bank classified 10.6 percent of the population in a state of poverty in 1991. Since then there has not been a detailed analysis on the incidence of poverty. This paper seeks to examine the extent of poverty among the elderly in Mauritius by examining the role of basic retirement pension in alleviating poverty among the elderly.

Objectives of the study

In fact there is no official poverty line in Mauritius. This study provides a relative approach to measure poverty. It assesses the proportion of the population whose income fall below 50 percent per capita 'equivalised income'. It is to be noted that what constitutes an adequate basic standard of living varies greatly between country over time. In this study, absolute poverty has been used coincidentally. Absolute threshold is very close to relative standard of living of 50 percent.

Report looks at the demographic characteristic of the Mauritian population. Second part analyses levels and sources of income while the third examines incidence and severity of poverty among different population. Fourth part extends to a multivariate analysis of poverty risk. The fifth part assesses the extent to which current basic retirement pension alleviates poverty among the elderly.

The research questions are:

- (1) Which unit of resource and unit of measurement should one choose?
- (2) How should one characterise the intra-household distribution of resources.
- (3) Which poverty index should be used as a basis for assessing poverty.
- (4) Which equivalence scale should one use?
- (5) Should one choose a relative or absolute poverty measure.

Other questions that were asked were:

- (a) How poor are the old in Mauritius
- (b) What characteristics contribute to an increase in incidence of poverty among elderly household.
- (c) To what extent does basic retirement pension alleviate poverty among elderly household.

Methodology

It can be noted that **household expenditure** is a better measure for current living standard.

Absolute poverty measure compares income, expenditure or welfare against absolute benchmark. Absolute poverty is defined in terms of a basket of consumption to afford a minimum standard of living.

Another approach which has gained in popularity is the method used by **Ravallion and Bidani (1994)** which is the **Food Energy Intake**. This method seeks to establish set level of calorific intake from food consumption. This method is often extended to non –food consumption.

The two methods mentioned above were used for this study. In this study, absolute poverty was used against a national poverty line of f\$3. Relative poverty was used which measures income, expenditure or welfare relative to some reference group. The relative and absolute poverty are very similar in this study.

A particular parametisation of **Foster, Green and Thornbecke** has also been used. According to this parameter the poverty headcount used is insensitive to the depth of poverty. Using this method, equal weight is given to all who fall below the poverty line regardless of the degree of the income fall short of the threshold and the headcount index does not account for transfer that take the poor above the poverty threshold.

The poverty gap index is an alternative to simple headcount .It is easier to interpret as it deals more effectively with depth of poverty. The poverty gap index considers the poverty accounts

for the amount by which an individual income fall short of poverty line expressed as a proportion of poverty threshold and summed for overall poor people. For example if index is 1.5 for poverty threshold of R3,000 the Mauritian government should raise all income or expenditure to at least R3,000 with resources equivalent to 1.5 percent of R3,000 or R45 per month per member of the full population. However, the problem associated with the poverty gap is that it is insensitive to transfers between poor households, if the transfer keeps both below the poverty line.

Salient Findings

Headcount poverty

- An estimate of 9.4 percent of the Mauritian population in 1996/1997 fall below 50 percent of median per capita income and 9.7 percent fall below an absolute poverty threshold of R 2,250 per month.
- The incidence of poverty in Mauritius varies greatly by household composition. Single parents, the elderly and families with children are more likely to be classified as poor.
- Up to 34 percent of single elderly adults and 19 percent have per capita equivalent below 50 percent of the population. Elderly adults in mixed families are less likely to be poor .The risk being higher in families with non -elderly. The likelihood of elderly adults to be poor is determined largely by their living arrangements.
- The majority of poor in Mauritius are not the elderly because they constitute a small proportion of the population.
- Female head of households are more likely to be poor.46.9 below 50 percent of median income than male -headed household .8.4 percent. There are differences in poverty rates of widowed female household with 15.7 percent and non widowed female 19.4 percent .Poverty incidence is greater in rural areas in Mauritius and Rodrigues.
- Depth of poverty among single parent household is a great deal more severe than elderly adult household.

Household Income versus Consumption

Greatest expenditure is food with share of food expenditure falling as per capita income rises. Expenditure on health, education, clothing and transport increases with the rise in income while expenditure on food, fuel and alcohol and alcohol declines as income rises.

Sensitivity Poverty to Poverty Threshold

Poverty rate rises with the value of poverty line. Elderly only household are poorest when poverty threshold reaches 100 percent of median per capita income.

Poverty Profile

Rodrigues contain the largest proportion of poor household.

Poverty Incidence

Poverty risk is greater in Rodrigues. Elderly adult household are in deepest poverty. In fact, elderly adults are poorer than non –elderly adults. Poor elderly household rely heavily on income from basic retirement pension. Single elderly adults, widowed woman rely on pension.

Basic Retirement pension is not the only source of retirement income for elderly adults .Average amount of retirement pension is higher among pension recipient living in non elderly adult household.

Analysis and Recommendations

- (1) The fact that intra household income is used enables one to compare income of elderly to non- elderly.
- (2) As gender disaggregated data among elderly has been provided this presents a better reality of women poverty as opposed to men poverty.
- (3) The method used by Ravallion and Bidani of calorific intake might not be applicable to Mauritius due to its level of development.

- (4) The poverty index of Foster, Green and Thornbecke is also a very erroneous method as one who is slightly below the poverty line might be considered as poor. In this case headcount poverty and poverty might be a better measure as it measures depth of poverty.
- (5) Programmes on poverty should focus on poverty of elderly as well.

Key Areas of Vulnerabilities in Mauritius (2001), DCDM

Background

This study was carried out to help all development partners engaged in the social sphere including government, donors, NGOs, the private sector, UN agencies and international financial institutions.

Objective of the study

The objective of the study was meant

- (i). To identify key areas of vulnerabilities.
- (ii). Secondly it aimed at evaluating whether existing/future social programmes as well as studies cover the key areas of vulnerabilities.
- (iii). Thirdly study aimed at providing suggestions on how greater coordination can be achieved among various programmes undertaken by respective development partners.

Methodology

Desk research was conducted in order to collect and assess data pertaining to key areas of vulnerabilities in Mauritius. Poverty and social research studies were consulted. The common country assessment was used as it provides an understanding of the development situation and development challenges facing Mauritius. Future areas of intervention were also recommended. Documents used in this specific exercise were based on the UNDAF –Mauritius. The United Nations Development Assistance, the Mauritius Common Country Assessment, the Mauritius National Strategy for Sustainable Development.

160 enterprises who participated claimed that they are involved in community activities. What is more interesting is that they feel responsible for driving economic development and job creation in the region where they are located. Private sector contributes to social development mostly through donations (37.1%) and sponsorship (23.3%). With the problem of riots in 1999

this has led to many private sector initiatives towards the problem of poverty and social exclusion in the country. Firms who were active in the social sphere were also contacted.

Other private sector enterprises apart from the ones identified from the MEF survey were contacted given their considerable contribution to the to social development in the country. To ensure a fair representation of the private sector firms from various fields were contacted such as agriculture, manufacturing and Quarrying, EPZ, Construction. Only 20% of private sector firms contacted responded to this survey.

Identification of Key areas of Vulnerabilities

There are areas which require pressing intervention to further social development. To determine areas of intervention the following criteria have been used. Urgent intervention is therefore needed as indicators pertaining to the incidence, severity trend over time reflect a deterioration in the named area.

- (1) They are areas perceived by different stakeholders as problematic
- (2) These are areas which are believed to have received inadequate coverage in terms of programme and research initiatives in the past.

Table 3: Key areas of vulnerabilities in Mauritius and Challenges faced.

Key areas of Vulnerabilities in Mauritius	Challenges Faced
Social Development	Poverty and Social Exclusion Drug abuse The Disabled Care of the elderly
Education	School Drop outs
Health	Low Birth weight Babies Teenage Pregnancies and high incidence of abortion HIV/Aids Non –Communicable diseases

The following were found out:

I Income

According to Commission Justice in 1994 the minimum salary required for a family of 4 persons was set out at R 5,129. On the contrary, a study carried out by Appavou Associates set the poverty line at R 3,500. A further study of the Ministry of Economic Development estimated the minimum food basket was 50% of total consumption expenditure while the remaining total expenditure accounted for non-food expenditure. This adds to R 2,600. According to 1996/1997 budget survey. 23% were found below this poverty threshold.

Moreover, another poverty threshold was set up at 50%. This resulted in R587 for 1996/1997. Based on CSO data about 11% were below this income threshold.

An increase in Income inequality was noted between 2001/2002 and 2006 and 2007 Share of total income going to 20% of total household at the lower end decreased from 6.4% in 2001/2002 to 6.1% in 2006/2007. On the contrary, share of the upper 20% of households increased from 44.% to 45.7%. This rise in income inequality is confirmed by an increase in Gini Coefficient from 0.371 in 2001 /2002 to 0.389 in 2006/2007, almost the same level as in 1996/1997(0.387)²

Significant regional differences have also been noted. With a higher poverty threshold set at R3,500, Poverty incidence was 41% for Rodrigues and 16% in Port Louis. Another study carried out by Duncan and Valenti establish an absolute poverty line at R2250 using the OECD equavalisation scale.

II Expenditure

Average Monthly household expenditure increased by 33.% from R11,390 in 2001/2002 to 15,188 in 2006/2007 After adjusting for inflation and the decrease in household size between 2001 and 2002 it was seen that there was a real increase in of almost 5% in the consumption expenditure of private household.³

² Household Budget Survey 2006/2007-Main Results and Updated Weights for the Consumer Price Index.

³ Household Budget Survey 2006/2007-Main Results and Updated Weights for the Consumer Price Index.

Largest broad category of expenditure remained 'Food and non- alcoholic beverages accounting for nearly 30% of total household expenditure in both 2001 /2002 (R3401 per month)

What we can conclude from this is that though income has increased income inequality has also increased.

To alleviate poverty, various programmes have been set up. The Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups has identified 53 regions which are classified as poor regions. Other programmes have also been set up with other development partners However; it is argued that there is an absence of coordination among them. It is questioned whether they are reaching the poorest of the poor. As for Rodrigues it is felt that there are insufficient programmes emphasizing on income generating activities.

Problems of poverty mean more than income inequality, it is linked to economic and social disparities. It is said to have intensified problems of frustration in the country. For instance, the problem of social exclusion resurfaced with the riots in 1999.

Poverty is often linked to exclusion. Exclusion can mean dissociating from friends, neighbours, neighbourhood, workplace. Moreover, educational attainment, employment status, economic status and the degree of stratification between groups can contribute to social exclusion.

In Mauritius deficit in housing and infrastructure of marginalized localities have contributed to exclusion.

Though private homes are there to cater for the elderly they are expensive thus not affordable .Moreover, the concept of value for money is not respected such as conditions of hygiene are not respected.

It has also been found that elderly women are relatively disadvantaged because they are unemployed. Only 4% of elderly women are employed compared to 20% of men implying that there is lesser income opportunities for women Income for elderly male was more than income of elderly female The average income of elderly male was more than double the income of elderly female with R5,000 against R2,000.This was due to the low educational attainment of women. Only 47% of elderly women have attended school compared to 74% of men. However regarding living arrangements 14% of elderly women were living on their own compared to 4%

of men. Most elderly men were married in 1999 whereas most elderly women were widowed with 81% of men married against 32% of women.

Education

Failure rate among some are as high as 60%. Statistics showing performance of schools by district shows that pupils from Black River have a pass rate of 38.5%(31.6%) for girls and 41.7% for girls compared to a pass rate of 71.3% for the district of Plaines Wilhems with 61.7% for boys and 75.9% for girls. This can be explained due to a high rate of absenteeism in deprived areas associated with food insufficiency, lack of school materials, low transport cost and low interest expressed/insufficient time devoted by parents over the children's education. Up to now Rodrigues still have a low level of pass rate at 53.6% in 1999 with 47.8% for boys and 60.2% for girls.

Apart from the problem of high CPE failure there is a high rate of school drop outs at the end of primary school cycle. According to statistics on education from the Action Plan for a new educational system 48% of the populations aged between 11-19 years were not enrolled in secondary schools. They are unable to enroll in secondary schools due to inadequate number of these schools. This problem is further exacerbated from the fact that they are not able to join the labour market with the inevitable result that they are under paid or exploited prey to antisocial behavior.

However, this problem has been addressed with the introduction of prevocational training in each secondary school absorbing school drop outs. Special needs of these children have been catered through teacher training. The effectiveness of such effort can be tested through the willingness of the labour market to absorb 15 year old teenagers.

Health

Women working in low paid jobs were disadvantaged in comparison to women in managerial positions. They are more likely to give birth to low birth weight babies associated with low maternal intakes of dairy and meat proteins. Low educational level of women determines the weight of babies. Cases of underweight babies were mostly prevalent in deprived areas.

Abortion

Women from low socio economic backgrounds were more affected by back street abortions. Given that abortion is illegal in Mauritius this problem needs to be tackled.

Child Rights Development

Child Prostitution

Erosion in family values and poverty has led families to coerce girls particularly school drop outs are prone to this

Domestic Violence

Financial considerations are more likely to keep women in battering relationship. It has been noted that allowance granted to women are insufficient to rear children and pay rent. With the majority of victims either in very low income or housewives they are highly dependent on their perpetrator. Provisions made by the Ministry of Social Security are insufficient. For example, if a woman leaves her husband being a domestic violence victim she is granted an allowance of R565. In addition she is granted child allowance according to the age of the child and rent allowance not exceeding R425. The best option therefore always remains to stay with the perpetrator.

Limitations of the Report

Research team encountered number of constraints during the data collection Unwillingness on the part of NGOs and other organizations to provide detailed information on details of funding disbursed on the programmes.

Positive Aspects of the Report

It gives a fairly good representation of the major intervention areas of key development partners in the country as well as forms of intervention for example through financial and technical support ,awareness raising ,research studies with regard to their objectives ,duration, funding (sources of amounts involved),expected beneficiaries and type of programme.

Analysis of the Report

- (1) This report provides a rhetoric of previous documents on poverty which has already been analysed thus nothing new is provided.
- (2) Participation rate was low thus it is very likely that information supplied cannot be generalized.
- (3) New programmes have been put in place since the publication of this report therefore it follows that key areas of vulnerabilities in this report have not been addressed.
- (4) In this report Mauritius has been compared to Rodrigues this is very erroneous since Mauritius population is higher and the extension of social problems is much greater.
- (5) Despite various programmes poverty still prevails because of drugs among teenagers.

Recommendations

- (1) There is a need for greater coordination among the various programmes.
- (2) Private sector is responsible for driving economic development however with interviews conducted among the poor living along the coastal regions it seems that with development of IRS livelihoods of fishermen are being threatened thus CSR needs to be carried out with a human face.

References

DCDM (2001) Key areas of Vulnerabilities in Mauritius.

Action Plan for Poverty Alleviation July 2001, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development-Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups

Background

Poverty can be defined and measured in a number of ways. A common definition of poverty relates to the inability to attain minimal standards measured in terms of basic consumption needs or the income required to satisfy these needs. Poverty is defined as the inability to satisfy basic needs such as food and shelter. A more comprehensive approach to poverty will consider other factors such as education, lack of access to public and private resources. Poverty is understood in multidimensional form. Information on poverty must be supplemented by information on access to productive employment, or to health, education and social services.

In fact, there is no established poverty line in Mauritius. Information obtained from the household budget survey gives an indication of income poverty. Low income households are those household whose consumption expenditure is less than the half median consumption of all private household in Mauritius. The median household consumption expenditure in the household budget survey of 1996/1997 was R6,136. 13% of household surveyed had earnings of less than half the median household expenditure of R3068 and could be categorized as the low –income households. It is to be noted that this is a fairly crude measure of income poverty as total income poverty and expenditure is considered irrespective of size and composition of households.

The human rights implication of poverty can be considered when measuring poverty. In more affluent region it has been found that there is lesser degree of concentration of poverty.

Poverty problems can be addressed by policy revision at macro economic as well as institutional level combined with targeted grass root approach in deprived areas. A targeted approach aims at pulling the weakest group in the mainstream for them to benefit from opportunities. There are important policy changes that are currently being introduced to address poverty related problem in the field of housing and education. It is vital to assess the impact of poverty alleviation programmes. Moreover, there is need to coordinate the different programmes, NGO's and private sector so as to avoid duplication.

Furthermore, poverty can only be successfully be addressed if there is paradigm shift in attitudes as poor are poor because they deserve to be poor.

Methodology

Method that was used to prepare the Action Plan involved.

1. Identification of the problems.
2. Definition of the objectives.
3. Establishment of an Action Plan.

In the first stage core problems were identified related to poverty alleviation that are considered to be critical in preventing organizations from attaining their objectives and fulfilling their mission. The problem tree was defined to show how all problems are interrelated. When negatives are converted into positives an objective tree was built.

Table 4: Effectiveness of NGOs

Current Situation	Strategies	Recommended Actions
<p>Although there have been a number of poverty alleviation programmes there has never been a proper understanding of the poverty problem.</p> <p>-There is lack of detailed data that reflect the true picture of multidimensional facet of poverty.</p> <p>-In spite of heavy investment, enterprise development has not sufficiently benefited local communities in suburbs, remote villages, coastal areas in Rodrigues in general.</p> <p>- In spite of rapid economic growth the contrast</p>	<p>A coordinated approach to poverty should be adopted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacity building in the field of social and community work should be supported. - Creation of conducive environment for greater economic dynamism and job creation. - Facilitate income – generating activities through micro- credit schemes to fight poverty. <p>-Integrate poverty alleviation initiatives in business development specially in poverty stricken areas</p>	<p>A committee consisting of various stakeholders NGOs and private sector should be set up with the following mandate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i). Development of appropriate benchmarks for assessing poverty using qualitative and quantitative information both at national, local and grass root level. (ii). Assess and evaluate all poverty alleviation programmes. (iii). Create a database on all studies/research interventions on poverty. (iv). Assess the effectiveness of existing social services

<p>between the affluent and the poor has intensified</p> <p>- Loss of employment in very low income families is cause of growing concern.</p>		<p>and social safety nets.</p> <p>Initiatives such as 'Contrat Emploi Solidarité' favouring employment and insertion of youths in deprived areas should be supported.</p> <p>- Micro credit schemes to facilitate access to credit with the necessary technical support should be created.</p> <p>- Setting up of appropriate mechanism to ensure effective participation of local communities integrated development projects.</p>
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Table 5: Effectiveness of Management in Poverty Alleviation Programmes and other factors

Current Situation	Strategies	Recommended Actions
No coordination among different Poverty Alleviation Programmes leading to wastage of resources with duplication	<p>Promote a pro-poor charter for collaboration between the different service providers to facilitate social interventions at grass root level</p> <p>Promote coordination among programmes.</p>	Mount regular training sessions for all personnel involved in poverty alleviation programmes.
<p>Though there is an impressive number of NGOs not all of them are sufficiently equipped to address poverty alleviation</p> <p>Absence of networking limits their intervention.</p> <p>Spirit of voluntary service has declined</p>	<p>Encourage NGOs to engage in poverty alleviation on programmes.</p> <p>Professionalise services of NGO's with accountability mechanisms</p> <p>Encourage joint networking among different NGOs to avoid duplication of actions.</p> <p>Encourage well established NGOs to support and assist them in implementing programmes</p>	<p>Compile information on all NGOs working in the field of poverty alleviation.</p> <p>Set up code of good practice for NGOs to ensure</p> <p>(i) good governance</p> <p>(ii) effectiveness.</p> <p>(iii) accountability.</p> <p>Sound management of NGOs through training programmes</p> <p>Support and expand initiatives for capacity building of NGOs</p> <p>Encourage well established Ngos to assist local communities in setting up</p>

	Creation of an appropriate framework to mobilize youth to initiate youth to voluntarism.	community based organizations and support existing ones. Support the setting up of Voluntary Youth Service organism to (i) Identify priority areas of intervention. (ii). Facilitate implementation of projects. (iii). Mobilise resources (iv). Reinforce assistance to organizations providing specialized care services to the disabled and elderly
According to the 1999 multipurpose survey 16% reported that their kids had access to kindergartens, nurseries facilities, preprimary school. There are unequal opportunity for toddlers from poor families	Promotion and Support Policy pertaining to Early Childhood Development involving NGO's CBO's and Ministries concerned. Teacher training in deprived region can be reinforced. Food supplement can be provided to children in deprived region.	Encourage government and NGOs to provide non formal educational facilities to out of school youth using existing schools after normal school hours. Programmes of existing prevocational and vocational schools can be reviewed to mobilize greater interest and reinforce public interest in their ability to integrate youth in the world of work Integration of art,music and theatre in non formal education programmes for school drop outs
With an improper system of prevocational schooling each year around 3,500 school drop outs fall prey to problems such as child labour, substance abuse and various form of delinquency and exploitation	Safety net mechanism to meet educational needs of very poor students should be reviewed. Devise more efficient programmes for out of school youths	Social workers should be recruited on a pilot basis to facilitate interface between school and the community and to act as focal point for coordination between the school and the community and to act as focal point between the NGO's, ministries and CBO's.
Unskilled workers are becoming increasingly unemployed in the changing labour market	Expanding and reinforcing education for children with disabilities	Collecting information on existing skills in deprived regions to valorize them and enable efficient participation of the community in non formal training and apprenticeship schemes with appropriate incentives
Insufficient interaction between the community and the school	Expand and reinforcing existing facilities for special attention to cater for the needs of children	Lay greater emphasis on realities of poverty in training programmes of teachers at all

<p>especially in deprived regions.</p> <p>Cases of nutritional problems with children from deprived regions have been noted both with children in and out of school.</p> <p>Needs of children with disabilities are not sufficiently met.</p> <p>Evidence shows there are behavioural problems in schools in deprived areas</p>	<p>with disabilities.</p> <p>Review programmes of citizenship and family life education for in and out school youth.</p> <p>Formulate programmes for adult education with NGOs and CBOs and the Ministry of Education.</p>	<p>levels.</p> <p>Assist local communities to launch food supplement programmes in preprimary schools where there are nutritional problems.</p> <p>Encourage and support initiatives to address special educational needs of disabled children.</p>
<p>There are major housing problem for the very poor. There is an estimated 3000 squatters on state land.</p>	<p>Formulate appropriate mechanism that identifies and prioritize felt needs (roads, sewerage, electricity, water) in underprivileged region)</p>	<p>Update and diffuse information on living conditions from latest housing census.</p> <p>Audit of social infrastructure, building, playgrounds, centres) per region)</p>
<p>There is growing perception that social infrastructure no longer meets the changing needs of the local community</p>	<p>Review housing policy with clear eligibility criteria for the poor)</p>	<p>Special attention by Local Government to most needy region.</p>
<p>Some sections of the population do not have access to proper to pipe water or sanitation facilities.</p> <p>According to housing census 2001, this reveals that 33281 households do not have access to sanitation while 5374 do not have access to piped water</p>	<p>Encourage low cost housing project with collaboration community, NGOs, private sector and international organizations.</p>	<p>Conduct survey to identify housing demand of low cost housing.</p> <p>Plans to upgrade social infrastructure in deprived areas.</p>
<p>Increasing social problems in low cost housing estate</p>	<p>Develop a community support system in low cost housing estate through recruitment of social motivators</p>	
<p>Absence of access facilities for the disabled</p>	<p>Improve access to public buildings for people with physical disabilities</p>	
<p>Rodriguan who come to Mauritius in search of job are living in precarious conditions</p>		<p>Set up maison d'accueil where Rodriguans can seek advice.</p>
<p>Single elderly persons face accommodation problems</p>		<p>Set up housing facilities to cater for the housing needs of the elderly.</p> <p>Introduce the concept of half way homes in the form of rented accommodation with</p>

		necessary support from young adults for young adults from homes or shelters, who are now able to earn their living.
There is evidence of feminisation of poverty due to changing socio-economic trends	Encourage family friendly measures in the world of work (e.g part time and flexi time, paternity leave, nurseries with industrial complex)	Reinforce audio visual programmes targeting both men and women on the sharing of responsibilities in the household and gender sensitive socialization of boys and girls.
The highest proportion of poor household are women headed	Training programmes for poorly educated women	To carry out study on women in the informal sector to identify their needs and constraints to put into place a support mechanism for women in that sector.
With decreasing job opportunities in the agricultural and EPZ sector the current strategy lies in the development of the of the IT sector however poorly educated women are marginalized on the labour market	Development of poorly educated women. Facilitate access of poor women to credit facilities, social aid and family welfare	Training and social support to women for micro credit schemes. Provide assistance t poorly educated women to upgrade their skills through appropriate training programmes. Make special efforts attract girls/women to enroll on vocational training programmes. Review assistance to women in distress with special emphasis on teenage and single mothers
Limited exposure to sensitization mainly on health related issues has negatively affected the quality of life of poor women	Develop a common framework and integrated mechanism to reach children in need	Encourage and give the necessary support to NGO's, CBO's and other organizations to address the needs of children in distress and those who have been abandoned.
The number of street children and child labour have increased especially in deprived regions Scarcity of appropriate facilities and child in distress	Developing integrated mechanism for "children in need"	Encouraging NGO's and CBO's to address the needs of children in distress and those who are in need. Mainstream among preprimary and primary teacher training programmes, methods of identifying different forms of handicap or other signs of distress to introduce appropriate referral mechanism.
Lack of information flow between all stakeholders engaged in alleviation of	Sensitising media on realities of poverty on proper policies,	Simplify and popularize information on existing programmes and social

<p>poverty.</p> <p>Inadequate or confusion on functioning of the programmes.</p> <p>Information on facilities being offered are not reaching the poor</p>	<p>programmes and intervention.</p> <p>Production of audio visual material to sensitise those in deprived regions or public in general.</p> <p>Media tools should be used to its fullest towards enhancing quality of life through health and environmental education programmes.</p> <p>Encouraging and support regional publications on local realities to reach the grass root level</p>	<p>assistance measures.</p> <p>Publication of newsletters on activities for poverty alleviation programmes.</p> <p>Production of documentaries, films and pamphlets on successful projects for circulation.</p> <p>Sensitise all officers involved in social delivery (welfare, health, probation, social security, police) to the realities of poverty)</p>
<p>Modern trends have led to greater individualism undermining community life and also having a damaging impact on the poor.</p> <p>Poor are preys to aggressive campaigns to consume</p>	<p>Review the functioning of all centres to make them responsive to the needs of the poor</p>	<p>Set up a committee comprising of representatives of community centres (Social Welfare Centres, SILWF Community Centres) to</p> <p>(i). Look into their functioning for an effective use of them.</p> <p>(ii). Develop more appropriate and innovative activities.</p> <p>(iii). Look into ways of ensuring that all segments of the population participate in the activities of the centres.</p> <p>Provide technical support to local community to organize courses in arts, music, drama, in deprived areas aiming at youth children in and out of school</p>
<p>Although there is a fairly comprehensive primary health care there is concern about incidence of certain poverty related conditions e.g malnutrition, low birth weight.</p> <p>Poor and unhealthy eating habits as well as poor sanitation.</p> <p>Overcrowding and absence of basic sanitary facilities</p>	<p>Review current support services in the health sector with special attention to the needs of the vulnerable and poor in remote deprived areas.</p> <p>Encourage community based communities involving local people NGO's and CBOs to fight behavioural problems substance abuse, unsafe sexual practices.</p>	<p>Reinforce medical social work in health institutions to attend to the needs of the people with vulnerabilities.</p> <p>Promote sound health awareness campaigns using innovative methods and appropriate audio-visual techniques to reach the most deprived.</p> <p>Commission study on nutritional status of children in</p>

	<p>Review and reinforce health education programmes to make them more responsive to the needs of the poor.</p> <p>Providing basic sanitary facilities in deprived regions.</p> <p>Make provision to facilitate access of both the elderly and the disabled to health and other related support services.</p>	<p>deprived areas.</p> <p>Increase sensitization and awareness programmes about health hazards associated with poor sanitation.</p>
<p>No clear mandate of local bodies for poverty alleviation.</p> <p>Lack of financial, institutional, technical capacity at the level of local authorities</p>	<p>Encourage coordination between elected members at national level, local bodies and grass root organizations to fight poverty.</p> <p>Encourage all elected members to identify poverty related problems in their respective localities and pass on information to organizations engaged in poverty alleviation.</p> <p>Keep all elected members at national or local level fully informed of all poverty alleviation programmes and actions and facilitate their interaction with grass root workers.</p> <p>Formulate clear mandate for local bodies to engage in poverty alleviation programmes in their localities.</p> <p>Ensure effective decentralization at local administration level both urban and rural , by increasing funding and strengthening institutional and technical capacity of local bodies</p>	<p>Formulate a clear mandate for poverty alleviation at the level of local administration bodies.</p> <p>Review existing local administration provisions to enable them to respond better to poverty related problems.</p> <p>Organise workshops to sensitise elected members both national and local to the multi dimensional aspects of poverty as well as on the need to listen to the voices of the poor and to ensure a participatory approach to poverty alleviation.</p> <p>Ensure participation of CBO's and other organizations in grass root work in the organization of social activities by national and local authorities and facilitate their access to and use of existing infrastructure such as schools ,halls centres, playgrounds,sports facilities etc.</p>

Analysis and Recommendations

- The household budget survey gives an indication of poverty quantitatively if not qualitatively. They might be complemented to other indicators to have a clearer picture of poverty.
- Although there is proper understanding of poverty expenses might not be directed towards the poor.

- There is lack of detailed data reflecting the true picture of multidimensional facet of poverty that is why there is need for more qualitative study of poverty.
- How far enterprise development has benefited remote areas should be looked at to target the poor.
- There must be coordination among the different poverty alleviation programmes to avoid duplication and wastage. Now with the empowerment programme responsible for all poverty alleviation programmes this will be reduced.
- Lack of volunteers have been addressed through the Ministry of Social Security volunteering programmes this will be solved.
- Community support system can be reinforced to better tackle poverty.
- It would be interesting to see how much poverty alleviation programmes has been able successful through the creation of income generating activities at grass root level.
- If NGOs are trained the poverty problem can be addressed.
- There should be follow up of programmes for people in deprived problems.
- Information on existing skills can be collected so as to tackle the poverty problem.
- How far has social workers recruited been able to address indiscipline or antisocial problems should be looked at to assess their effectiveness.

References

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Background

Poverty has many faces changing from place to place and across time. Poverty is a lack of basic needs, shelter and clothing. Poverty can also be hunger, no access to school and health services and not having job. Poverty is also powerlessness, lack of freedom or voice in what happens in the community. According to a recent study of the World Bank study there was an estimated 9.7% mauritian population who were classified as poor with an income of less than R5,000 per month.

Method used

Based on relative development index, a list of 53 deprived areas has been established. Using a targeted approach 229 pockets of poverty has been identified averaging to 50 households. The total number of households considered as poor is around 8,000 and a population of 30,000 members.

Results noted

At the world summit in Copenhagen in 1995, the following were noted:

- Inequality is a global phenomenon.
- Three billion people or half of the world population were living on one dollar a day.
- The GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of the 48 nations is less than the wealth of three richest people.
- More than 2 billion people do not have access to school or clean drinking water.
- The Insurgence of HIV /Aids.
- Around 30,000 children die everyday.
- It has been noted that there has been uneven progress. The flows of trade, capital, technology that integrate the world economy are yielding benefits to millions, but poverty still persist.

- To meet the Millenium Development goals, all countries must invest in quality governance, institutional capacity, empowering the poor and put in place the appropriate framework with adequate resources to tackle illiteracy, disease and alleviate poverty.

There are several anti-programmes that have been put in place in 1995. Some are

1995- Trust Fund pour “ La Lutte contre l'exclusion”

1999- Trust fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups.

1999- L'évé Débouté in Rodrigues

1999-A Nou Diboute Ensam – a Poverty Alleviation funded by European Union.

2000-International Fund for Agricultural Development –IFAD-Phase I, II&III

2005- Decentralised Co-operation Programme

2006- Empowerment Programme

1997- Committee on Poverty Association of the President.

An evaluation of these programmes have given the following result:

- It has been noted that all these programmes have mitigated results due to the following result:
- Most of the programmes were time bound thus no proper framework was established.
- Activities have been abandoned and there has not been any follow up.
- With no official poverty line, the various programmes are not reaching the real poor.
- As programmes were temporary there has not been training of qualified staff. Thus the operations are of poor quality.
- Poverty Alleviation is a slow process and given that programmes are to be implemented during set time frame. This conflict created more confusion rather than solution to poverty problem in Mauritius.

The author recommends the following:

- A clear definition of the poverty line.
- Establishment of a co-ordinating body for a common programme targeting the poor.
- Control and channelling of all pro- poor funds by one institution for sustainability.
- Adapt the education and training according to the needs of vulnerable groups. (It is argued that the educational system is producing only failures from this category of people).

- Provide adequate resources for inclusion of Ngos, Universities and private sectors in all programmes.

Analysis

- Although there is no official poverty line in Mauritius there is a difference made between median and average income, thus people who has an income lower than these are considered as poor. Besides, it is high time to have an official poverty line.
- Given that programmes have a short span of time it is quite difficult to have immediate results in alleviating poverty.
- It is a fact that though there are programmes some of them have not reached the poor. In some cases this has occurred in the absence of a poverty line. More than that it can be most programmes have been financing administrative cost rather than real actions for poverty alleviation.
- Actions of those working towards poverty alleviation in the education are adapted to the needs of deprived groups not all of them are failures.

Recommendations

- Even though programmes have short span of time there should be regular follow up.
- There should be an official poverty line in Mauritius thus it would be easy to target the officially poor. Programmes might also be targeted directly towards them.
- Staff working on poverty alleviation programme should be trained to ensure better provision of services.
- There should be proper networking among all those working in the field of poverty alleviation.

References

Hurbungs S. (2007), " *An Evaluation of the Different Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Mauritius*", **Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Trust Fund for the Social of Vulnerable Groups.**

Background

Poverty and exclusion cannot be looked at separated. It is to be noted that in spite of economic progress achieved several communities are still labouring under severe socio-economic and cultural handicap some are found in specific regions.

Objective of the Study

Article aims at looking at exclusion from an educational point of view. Both government and voluntary organisation have been taking food and clothing, government focused on curative and protective measures.

Two observations can be made. Government and charitable organisations have tended to equate exclusion with poverty. Material poverty have been made to alleviate the situation but did not solve this problem .In fact, the situation has worsened .In the 1995-1996 budget government made a special provision Rs500m for these items.

In the context of a poverty study it would be interesting to find if exclusion still prevails in these regions.

Methodology

Studies studied main form of exclusion by identifying causes and processes that create excluded people. Areas selected for the study Vallée Pitot, Tranquebar and Roche Bois.

Paper focuses on children living in these areas and their education could break the vicious circle of exclusion. Exclusion has been the key to social mobility. However, it does not always fulfil this role. The system often fails pupils from specific regions.

Findings

Most inhabitants were in semiskilled or unskilled manual workers. In Bambous, many of the workers are agricultural workers. Women tend to work in textile factories. Despite low level of education parents are aware of the value of education.

There are varying degrees of social problems in these regions. Unscrupulous institutions exploit parents in these areas.

Almost 80% of those who leave low achieving schools do not go to secondary schools. Classrooms, libraries and playgrounds are not conducive for learning.

Children free time after school and during school holidays tend to be spent on odd chores, watching television, playing with other children. These children also display anti social behaviour.

Analysis and Recommendations

- In the context of poverty study focus should be on areas, which are excluded. Does exclusion still prevail in these areas?
- Has the performance of low achieving schools still low, is the same situation prevailing up to now.
- In which types of jobs are these parents in?
- Before more than 80% of pupils after primary schools did not go to secondary schools
- Does the same situation prevail up to now?
- Does the same type of infrastructure exist in these schools.

Poverty Study, “*The Characteristics and Experience of Poverty in Mauritius*” (1997), Appavoo and Associates and Data Research Africa.

Background

Despite high level of economic growth over the last ten years pockets of poverty have persisted. Quality of life has deteriorated. To ensure that quality and economic performance is improved development should go beyond economic growth and provision of safety requires patterns of growth and provision of safety net measures requires patterns of growth that facilitate carefully designed government interventions to reduce inequality and poverty.

This study was undertaken to facilitate the development of appropriate policies for the reduction and eventual elimination of poverty.

Objective of the Study

Specific Objectives of the Study .are:

- (1) To assess the extent of poverty in Mauritius
- (2) To establish a poverty profile
- (3) To examine the impact of existing social services on the vulnerable sections of the population.

This study will focus attention on the identification and analysis of those focus which leads to persistence of poverty and its reproduction to future generation. Moreover, this study will enable Government of Mauritius to implement appropriate policies that improve social security and access to opportunities to participate in social and economic activities.

Methodology

Poverty profile design questionnaire was undertaken by Data Research Africa. Questionnaire was based on the living standard measurement survey (LSMS) that has been used by the World Bank Discussions was held with University Academics and key informants in government and NGO sector. Draft questionnaires prepared were reviewed with local partners to suit second

draft questionnaire was discussed with Ministry of Economic Planning and Development Officials for comments. A pilot study was undertaken under the supervision of Data Research Africa. After assessing outcome of final study further modification was made and questionnaire was finalised.

Sampling Frame

A simple random sample would have included many households who cannot be considered to be poor but would have been wasteful. Areas in which poverty was concentrated were chosen for the study.

Sample frame was eventually constructed from three spatially referenced indicators namely:

- (1) The poorest wards were ranked in terms of Relative Development Index (RDI) developed by the CSO. Using this measure some poor might have been left out. Sample was supplemented with two other measures.
- (2) List of schools according CPE results over the last three years was chosen. It was assumed that there would be correlation between levels of economic and social poverty and school performance. Additional poor areas could be identified from school performance. 85 worst performing schools performance schools from a list of schools by results over the last years were chosen. A subjective measure was also included from a list Trust Fund against Exclusion. A sample frame consisting of poorest wards and village council was generated. Sample frame included 402 enumerator areas.

Sampling Methodology

When sample was constructed multistage cluster sampling methodology was employed. A total of 100 Enumerator Areas in Mauritius was randomly selected from a list of enumerated areas identified by sampling frame. The enumerated areas constituted the primary sampling unit. A sample of 2200 household was allocated between selected enumerated areas.

Field work

Team of enumerators was recruited to carry out the fieldwork. Enumerators selected presented specific criteria namely, they had an understanding of specific areas to be surveyed.

Data Collection

Information from selected household was obtained based on criteria:

- (1) Survey details
- (2) Details of respondents
- (3) Household Roster
- (4) Details on access to social welfare.
- (5) Social Problems
- (6) Employment status and occupational structure
- (7) Non agricultural, self and additional employment
- (8) Regular food and non food spending
- (9) Details of the homestead.
- (10) Agricultural Production

Limitations of Study

Errors in surveys in Mauritius are inevitable, they are

- (1) Sampling technique
- (2) Sample size
- (3) Errors resulting from misunderstanding of questions
- (4) Errors from form of questions.
- (5) Passive deception on the part of the respondents.
 - (i) Sample techniques and size of sample are inevitable but has been minimised by enforcement of sample frame.
 - (ii) Some vulnerable group like institutionalised elderly and disabled have been omitted.
 - (iii) Errors resulting from questionnaire form can be overcome by interactive process of questionnaire design followed with local expertise, pilot studies for the questionnaires and data research Africa.

- (iv) Errors resulting from questionnaire form and passive deception of respondents were minimised through methodical and intensive fieldwork interview program.

Statistics gathered in the course of this study showed that Mauritius has largely won the battle against absolute poverty. Socio economic indicators are more favourable compared to achievements of the more developed countries.

Salient Findings

Statistics gathered in the course of this study showed that Mauritius has largely won the battle against absolute poverty. Socio economic indicators are more favourable compared to achievement of the more developed countries.

Despite the efforts have put into place and maintain a concept of welfare state there are still extreme poverty.

Despite equal access to all Mauritians relative poverty seems to be concentrated in a certain region.

Rodrigues had the highest proportion of poor and ultra poor household. In Mauritius, Flacq and Rivière du Rempart had the highest incidence of poor household and poor individuals. The ultra poor household highest incidence were in Pamplemousses, Rivière Noire and Flacq while the highest incidence of ultra poor household was in Rivière Noire 4.0%, Pamplemousses 3.9% and Plaines Wilhems 3.1%.

In terms of demographic profile of poverty, large households with more dependents are more likely to be poor. Average household size was 4.8 among poor households compared to 4.1 for the non -poor. Female- headed household are more likely to be poor than male- headed household.

Economic Profile

Less women than men were still at an educational or vocational institution. There was no disparity of earnings between the occupational classes. But women earned less than men and the disparity increased for the poorly educated women. Earnings were correlated with educational attainment in Rodrigues.

Unemployment

Incidence of poverty was far higher among women than men with 31% as compared to 18%. With underemployment and lower labour force participation of women this has resulted in women being extremely under-represented in the workplace.

Unpaid labour

The process of women reproductive role is naturalised. Women unpaid labour may an important consideration in understanding sex differences in the experience of poverty. Not accounting for unpaid labour may adversely affect women's participation in the labour force. Lower incomes of women affect their access to resources as housing, child care, water and energy

Employment, Unemployment and Poverty

Unemployment rate was higher among those who are poor 31% compared 17% among the non-poor. Unemployment rate was higher among women 40% and 25%. Workers who are considered as poor are those who are in low skilled jobs.

Absence of a permanent job or lack of job security was the main problem experienced by the poor.

Expenditure Patterns

Marked differences were found between male-headed household and female headed household. Female headed household spend a higher proportion on food items than male headed household. This is due to the low expenditure of female-headed household.

Social Profile

Regions chosen had a higher incidence of alcoholism, hard drug abuse, soft drug abuse, sex among teenagers, gambling and unemployment. However, the situation is not alarming. Drug abuse and prostitution and theft are considered as problems however violent crime is not perceived as major problem nor is there problem of organised gangs.

Basic Needs

Health system was accessible of satisfactory quality and affordable. However, affordability is restricted that requires higher cost, quality, behaviour and attitudes of staff.

Education

Though there are educational policy and social objectives of empowering workers, it can be seen that schools are highly elitist. There is no equality of results. There is division between five star schools and sink schools are found in disadvantaged areas. Access to preschools is still a problem.

Primary schools were more affordable but pre- schools were less affordable. IVTB schools were less affordable or not affordable at all.

Although schooling is free yet lack of finance to buy books, to pay for private schools, clothes or transport are cost which are felt by parents.

Type of enterprise

Most common type of self-employment was fishing. Other types of enterprise consisted of building or doing repairs, handicraft and selling goods.

The Environment

Degradation of the environment is affecting a particular category of people (fishermen) and the livelihood of the poor. This in fact might undermine the livelihood of the tourist industry.

Housing

With government encouraging a policy of house ownership sugar camps are gradually phased out.

Analysis and Recommendations

- (1) Policies focusing on poverty should take different factors into consideration.
- (2) However, since different factors have been considered this gives a better picture of reality.
- (3) It is stated that unemployment figures has been strangely deflated which does not reflect reality of things.
- (4) As triangulation method has been adopted this serves as a basis for other studies to be carried out.

Methodology

3.0 METHODOLOGY ADOPTED BY THE PO

3.1 *Introduction*

Poverty was seen as both a social and economic phenomenon interlinking with other phenomenas such that each of them cannot be looked at in isolation thus a wider understanding of them is required. More than a social phenomenon poverty is a lived experience that if affects them both in the economic and social sense. Therefore, order to address poverty an understanding of its wider impact is required.

3.2 *Implementation*

Background research was carried out in the form of literature reviews and reading of reports. It was from these that the research questions could be formulated. Therefore, research was based on hypothesis testing.

The second stage of this exercise consisted of selecting areas in Mauritius which are considered to be relatively economically and socially deprived. These are areas populated by the poor and the poorest of Mauritius.

There were no preliminary visits carried out in these regions before interviews as these were already done for the preliminary report.

Interviewees were briefly explained the purpose of their visits and how information gathered from the interviews will be used.

The research topic was already determined .they were based on almost the same question as the first round of implementation.

For fieldwork, research design that generated efficient analysis and dissemination of results was adopted. This was carried out during a short span of time as time was limited Speed was an essential part of the research

The Qualitative Methodology

The qualitative methodology was used as poverty was viewed both as a social and economic phenomenon. Poverty was examined in broader terms not solely as a social problem. Qualitative method adopted provided a better explanation on a case to case basis .Poverty as a social phenomenon and as a symptom that could be better explained through this methodology.

Qualitative methodology used can better assess how changes in key variables such as income expenditure and other factors impacted on the quality of life of these people. Qualitative analysis therefore provided a better analysis of poverty as a social and economic phenomenon.

Qualitative research method was chosen laying emphasis on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured .With qualitative method of stress was laid on the socially constructed nature of reality .Social experience of people living in poverty was pictured. The epistemological question that was asked to study poverty was” what could be actually learned from individual experiences of people living in poverty .Triangulation method was adopted providing credibility of descriptions and interpretations .Through this method experiential knowledge of poverty cases and close attention to the influence of its social, political and other context was paid.

Presently there are two categories of poor one of them is the poor themselves while the second category is the poorest of the poor. There were some who were already poor but with changes they are now on the verge of falling into poverty.

Poverty as a singular case

Here poverty is seen as a complex case in itself. Inquiry was carried out similar to ethno methodologists such as methods of cooking, methods of surviving which are here methods of securing alternative means of livelihood, other activities they were involved order to meet ends. The social environments as well as the activity patterns were useful in understanding poverty .In other words, poverty was seen as a particular case as exemplified in the next section.

Seeking the particular more than the ordinary

In using the qualitative method of study the following particularities were noted

- (1) The nature of the case in particular namely its activity and functions.
- (2) Its historical background.
- (3) The physical setting
- (4) The political, economic, legal and aesthetic setting.

Intrinsic and Instrumental interest in cases

Different type of cases were studied from the impoverished areas including the urban, rural and coastal areas .This was undertaken primarily to have a better understanding of poverty. In this way similarities and contrast between cases could be established. Poverty is no longer viewed as an abstract construct or generic phenomenon Insights of poverty were gained from studies carried out .A more detailed analysis was thus provided .Basically, the general conditions of these people were obtained .A schema could be issued to illustrate this.

Figure 4: Diagram showing how cases are studied using qualitative methods. This represents how each case was studied. Some of these cases were similar and dissimilar. Depending on the regions chosen.



Adapted Figure from Case Study, Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, Pg 446

From this diagram there are two main aspects on which interview questions were based on namely

- (1) What are the main issues for people living in poverty.
- (2) Main information questions that could be asked in relation to basic needs affecting their lives.

Issues

The issues that were raised were related to health, education, diet and nutrition, access to services, awareness of programmes, satisfaction in relation to services offered to them, sustainability and also transport. Some of these cases were similar and dissimilar depending on the regions chosen and also on the specificity of each case.

Organising

Questions focused on a small number of research questions. Studies were carried out based on a number of questions on almost the same theme as the first round of implementation. That is, they pertained to education, housing, health, income, quality of life, access to transport and access to available services for the poor and infrastructure.

The dominant theme was whether there has been an improvement or deterioration in their standards of living. Questions were both general and specific aiming at providing an overall understanding as well as a causal explanation of events. It was ensured that the possible explanation of poverty would be provided.

Context

Households were not different from each other. They were chosen from those areas who have a low relative development index. They were households who have a very low level of income. They have often been referred to as the poor or the poorest of the poor. They worked in either low paid jobs or informal jobs. In some households both husband and wife were in paid employment. In most cases only a single member was in paid employment. There were cases where in spite of being in paid employment these people often had recourse to multiple jobs to sustain themselves.

Case studies chosen can be chosen as typification of other cases. In other words they are either typical or even atypical if they were different.

Interactivity

The functioning of the neighbourhood and community were observed. Facts were gathered about their relationship with governmental organization as well as non-governmental organizations. Based on these activities descriptions were given. The interactivity functions and contexts were described. Like quantitative researchers effects of the different variables related to poverty were also studied.

Sampling

Sample was chosen from poverty stricken areas. People from different age groups, gender and locality were chosen. The main characteristics that they all have was that they were either poor or they were the poorest of the poor. There were both males and females chosen to ensure gender balanced views. Localities chosen were urban, rural, semi-urban and semi-rural. Coastal regions as well as non coastal regions were thus chosen. Participants were of different age groups, that is, they were children, teenagers, adults and elders. Their age group varied from 8-70 years old. Handicapped individuals were also included.

From the RDI table it is clear that some of the areas having the lowest RDI are close to each other thus they are located in the same VCA. Moreover, they were likely to share the same characteristics and were likely to have the same problems. To counteract these problem areas from different VCAs were chosen. A few of them are Cotteau Raffin, Panchavati, Bois des Amourettes and Roches Bois. Apart from these other areas were chosen from the geographical mapping of the CSO which are identified as impoverished area.

Sample consisted of small subsection of the population yet representativeness was ensured. That is the situation in which key informants were in should reflect the reality of all people living in this type of situation.

The first stage was determined by the research topic in question. The number of interviewers interviewed was not meant to reflect the opinions and views of only these few people.

The purposeful sampling technique was used which is commonly known as the judgmental sampling technique was used .This was seen as the most productive as a sampling technique.

Table 6: The 10 Lowest Scoring VCAs on the CSO RDI Index 2000

The 10 Lowest Scoring VCAs on the CSO RDI Index 2000			
Grand Sable VCA	2,041	0.5905	136
Chamarel VCA	625	0.5815	137
Bois des Amourettes VCA	1,836	0.5761	138
Richelieu VCA	4,494	0.5707	139
Gros Caillou VCA	2,907	0.5702	140
Case Noyale VCA	1,319	0.5655	141
Bambous Virieux VCA	1,424	0.5473	142
Baie du Cap VCA	2,205	0.5437	143
Rodrigues Island	35,779	0.4779	144
Le Morne VCA	1,143	0.4264	145
Source: Central Statistical Office			

Table 7: Relative Development Index 2000

Table A1 Relative Development Index 2000			
Municipal Ward or Village Council Area	Resident population Census 2000	Relative development index ¹	Rank in descending order of relative development index
Town of Q. Bornes - Ward 2	22,305	0.9072	1
Town of Q. Bornes - Ward 1	23,423	0.8535	2
Town of B.B/R.Hill - Ward 4	29,079	0.8518	3
Town of Vac./Phoenix - Ward 3	23,290	0.8441	4
Town of Curepipe - Ward 2	24,362	0.8289	5
Town of B.B/R.Hill - Ward 3	23,443	0.8170	6
Town of Curepipe - Ward 3	28,387	0.8110	7
Town of B.B/R.Hill - Ward 2	26,901	0.8106	8
Moka VCA	8,286	0.8041	9
Long Mountain VCA	7,100	0.8004	10

Camp Thorel VCA	2,154	0.7991	11
Town of Vac./Phoenix - Ward 2	24,571	0.7985	12
Town of Curepipe - Ward 1	26,171	0.7972	13
Flic en Flac VCA	1,739	0.7870	14
Poudre d'Or Hamlet VCA	2,102	0.7785	15
Amitié VCA	1,947	0.7765	16
Crève Coeur VCA	2,828	0.7750	17
Town of Vac./Phoenix - Ward 4	25,768	0.7747	18
Triolet VCA	21,250	0.7705	19
Union Park VCA	3,788	0.7699	20
Town of Vac./Phoenix - Ward 1	26,437	0.7689	21
New Grove VCA	9,184	0.7688	22
Morcellement St. André VCA	5,616	0.7654	23
Mare d'Albert VCA	4,424	0.7643	24
L'Avenir VCA	2,374	0.7641	25
St. Julien d'Hotman VCA	3,055	0.7638	26
Tamarin VCA	3,256	0.7637	27
St. Pierre VCA	15,382	0.7600	28
Baie du Tombeau VCA	12,011	0.7599	29
Espérance Trébuchet VCA	2,141	0.7575	30
Cottage VCA	3,361	0.7566	31
Dagotière VCA	6,480	0.7563	32
Plaines des Roches VCA	3,888	0.7558	33
Rivière du Rempart VCA	10,761	0.7543	34
Belle Vue Maurel VCA	4,690	0.7542	35
Grand Baie VCA	10,611	0.7532	36
Ripailles VCA	2,858	0.7531	37
Plaine des Papayes VCA	6,956	0.7517	38
Lalmatie VCA	9,532	0.7504	39
Town of Q. Bornes - Ward 3	30,156	0.7491	40
Town of Port Louis - Ward 1	29,844	0.7441	41
Rivière des Anguilles VCA	9,389	0.7423	42
Piton VCA	5,446	0.7416	43
Rose Belle VCA	11,665	0.7414	44
Souillac VCA	4,154	0.7393	45
Fond du Sac VCA	5,293	0.7385	46
Verdun VCA	2,069	0.7382	47

Calebasses VCA	4,245	0.7341	48
Médine Camp de Masque VCA	6,637	0.7341	49
Petit Raffray VCA	8,403	0.7338	50
Central Flacq VCA	16,225	0.7334	51
Town of Port Louis - Ward 4	20,684	0.7333	52
Bon Accueil VCA	6,004	0.7332	53
Villebague VCA	2,353	0.7320	54
Albion VCA	2,815	0.7309	55
Town of Port Louis - Ward 3	23,160	0.7305	56
Camp Ithier VCA	4,032	0.7304	57
Town of B.B/R.Hill - Ward 1	24,449	0.7304	58
Goodlands VCA	19,273	0.7300	59
Mare La Chaux VCA	1,885	0.7289	60
Nouvelle France VCA	6,691	0.7247	61
Camp de Masque VCA	2,493	0.7236	62
Rivière du Poste VCA	2,108	0.7222	63
Cap Malheureux VCA	4,427	0.7216	64
Brisée Verdière VCA	6,756	0.7209	65
Le Hochet VCA	13,878	0.7206	66
Mahébourg VCA	15,753	0.7203	67
Pamplemousses VCA	8,069	0.7201	68
D'Epinay VCA	4,774	0.7167	69
Laventure VCA	5,654	0.7165	70
Providence VCA	2,929	0.7163	71
Town of Port Louis - Ward 2	16,782	0.7139	72
Montagne Blanche VCA	8,116	0.7137	73
Roche Terre VCA	2,949	0.7109	74
Mare Tabac VCA	2,513	0.7098	75
Ecroignard VCA	5,453	0.7084	76
Amaury VCA	2,684	0.7074	77
Melrose VCA	1,876	0.7067	78
Chemin Grenier VCA	11,782	0.7064	79
La Laura - Malenga VCA	1,230	0.7055	80
Espérance VCA	1,760	0.7034	81
Midlands VCA	4,261	0.7030	82
Chamouny VCA	4,647	0.7024	83
Notre Dame VCA	3,615	0.7022	84

Pailles VCA	9,954	0.7020	85
Quartier Militaire VCA	6,020	0.7002	86
L'Escalier VCA	7,772	0.6990	87
Pointe aux Piments VCA	6,900	0.6933	88
Grand Bois VCA	7,381	0.6933	89
Congomah VCA	1,786	0.6924	90
St. Julien (Haut de Flacq) VCA	2,921	0.6920	91
Queen Victoria VCA	2,771	0.6869	92
Camp de Masque Pavé VCA	4,141	0.6858	93
Roches Noires VCA	5,284	0.6854	94
The Vale VCA	3,417	0.6838	95
Grand Gaube VCA	6,596	0.6834	96
Camp Diable VCA	4,807	0.6824	97
Surinam VCA	10,045	0.6802	98
Britannia VCA	1,476	0.6773	99
Poudre d'Or VCA	4,547	0.6761	100
St. Aubin VCA	1,569	0.6747	101
Plaine Magnien VCA	9,963	0.6747	102
Town of Port Louis - Ward 6	28,934	0.6745	103
Bois Chéri VCA	3,510	0.6737	104
Grand Bel Air VCA	1,342	0.6710	105
Petit Bel Air VCA	1,139	0.6710	106
Beau Vallon VCA	6,485	0.6701	107
Bananes VCA	603	0.6693	108
Sébastopol VCA	5,263	0.6641	109
Cluny VCA	1,506	0.6621	110
Town of Port Louis - Ward 5	24,899	0.6593	111
Trou d'Eau Douce VCA	5,190	0.6543	112
Bel Air Rivière Sèche VCA	16,189	0.6433	113
Arsenal VCA	2,373	0.6420	114
Trois Boutiques VCA	7,362	0.6417	115
Mare Chicose VCA	409	0.6403	116
Old Grand Port VCA	2,779	0.6400	117
Dubreuil VCA	2,555	0.6399	118
Clémencia VCA	1,681	0.6370	119
Grande Rivière Noire VCA	2,042	0.6355	120
La Gaulette VCA	1,917	0.6340	121

Terre Rouge VCA	8,736	0.6317	122
Cascavelle VCA	2,260	0.6316	123
Rivière des Créoles VCA	2,965	0.6255	124
Poste de Flacq VCA	6,535	0.6244	125
Mapou VCA	1,187	0.6208	126
Petite Rivière VCA	4,611	0.6202	127
Quatre Cocos VCA	5,244	0.6160	128
Bambous VCA	11,285	0.6079	129
Bel Ombre VCA	2,407	0.6035	130
St. Hubert VCA	3,855	0.6034	131
Grand River South East VCA	2,265	0.6011	132
Quatre Soeurs VCA	3,220	0.5950	133
Olivia VCA	3,646	0.5929	134
Benarès VCA	2,039	0.5922	135
Grand Sable VCA	2,041	0.5905	136
Chamarel VCA	625	0.5815	137
Bois des Amourettes VCA	1,836	0.5761	138
Richelieu VCA	4,494	0.5707	139
Gros Caillou VCA	2,907	0.5702	140
Case Noyale VCA	1,319	0.5655	141
Bambous Virieux VCA	1,424	0.5473	142
Baie du Cap VCA	2,205	0.5437	143
Rodrigues Island	35,779	0.4779	144
Le Morne VCA	1,143	0.4264	145
Republic of Mauritius	1,178,848	0.7313	-
Source: Central Statistics Office			

Interview Length

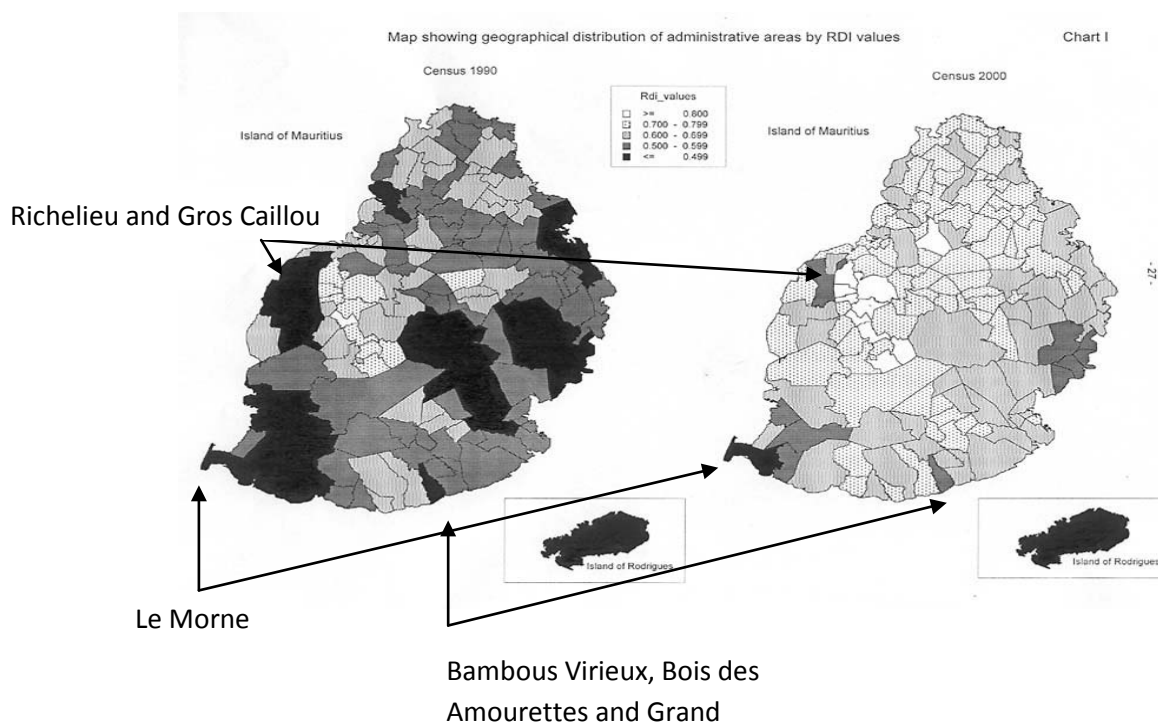
The length of the interview was a determinant factor as such based on the knowledge, experience, background and feeling of the interviewer. The length of the interview was not too long to avoid stress among the interviewees but was not too short or brief either so as not to catch the essential information. It was timed in such a way so as the interviewee had enough time to relax, understand the topic, the aim of the study and develop contact with the interviewer. In case of complex questions these were clarified.

Sampling Frame

The sampling frame was determined depending on the background information for study. It was ensured that it addressed the research questions under study and also that it addressed the needs of the directing sample. There were some modifications brought about by the researcher

Geographical Mapping

Geographical mapping as used in initial surveys in the same area such as those based on CMPHS and the HBS of the CSO or those created by the Centre for Applied Social Research or other organizations were used. In contrast to other studies more regions generally considered as poverty stricken regions were chosen.



Source: RDI of the Central Statistics Office

Topics Chosen

The topics chosen were quite similar to the first round grouped by themes such as education health, nutrition, housing conditions, infrastructure, gender, feminization of poverty, access to services, informal credit and access to leisure facilities.

Findings

4.0 FINDINGS

Since the early 1970s Mauritius has achieved substantial poverty reduction with the process of industrialization and development. The speed and scope of this reduction has increased since the turn of the century due to the impact of the various programmes and funds that have been set up aimed at poverty reduction, poverty alleviation and poverty eradication.

This chapter presents the finding of the various fieldwork activities implemented by the Poverty Observatory of Mauritius during 2009 and 2010.

The fieldwork was generally conducted with individuals or groups of individuals loosely convened in communities across the Republic of Mauritius. No formalized focus groups were held.

The communities selected for the implementation of fieldwork were selected by using sampling criteria applied to the Relative Development Index presented by the Central Statistics Office of Mauritius and other related poverty based indices such as that held by the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups.

The results were compiled in different ways; written records of conversations, digital recordings, photographs and video.

This particular chapter is structured to present a picture of poverty in contemporary Mauritius that is based on how the poor view themselves in response to variables presented in the interviewing process issues as education, health, nutrition, access to services, gender ,land ownership, transport and leisure.

4.1 Education

The majority of the children from poor families in Mauritius do attend school particularly where relevant schools were nearby, so that there was no transport cost involved. Such schools included those designated Zone Education Prioritaire (ZEP) schools. The fact that primary education in Mauritius is not only free but is mandatory was a factor but the results did also

show that many poor parents understand that education is an important factor in giving their children the best opportunity available to escape poverty.

However, there are other associated costs with education including uniforms, books, pens and pencils etc. that many of the respondents indicated they were finding it difficult to afford. This was particularly relevant to secondary school where the additional burden of private tuition becomes a factor. The highly competitive nature of education in Mauritius means that private tuition becomes necessary to give children an extra push towards success. As this is not possible for many poor families, given their severely limited income, it acts as a controlling factor on the opportunities of children who might find their chances limited not through a lack of ability or a lack of desire to achieve a good education but because there was a lack of available funds to pay for necessary tuition. This was seen by many poor people as being a factor in prolonging the poverty cycle.

When asked about the services provided by the official programmes aimed at poverty reduction, such as the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme (EAPP), a majority of the respondents were unaware of what such programmes do and stating that there was little visibility of programme officers on the ground.

From the point of view of the EAP, they are highly involved in poverty reduction and they say that officers have paid visits to established poor neighbourhoods to survey very poor children. The intention of such visits is to identify children from deprived households and to ensure that they attend preprimary schools. However, the argument is how successful this will be in eradicating poverty given that the later problems with schooling, such as the cost of school materials and private tuition will conspire to prevent many of these children from achieving a decent education for no reason other than an inability to pay for it.

Where parents were employed it is not surprising to discover that their employment was in low paid jobs such as working as maids, fishermen or masons. Parents themselves did not generally have a very high level of education with it not uncommon for them to have little or no formal education. This meant that these parents were unable to encourage their children in their studies as they were unable to help their children with their homework or to assist with tutoring. It was the case that where assistance was forthcoming it was mostly from older siblings and relations who themselves were victims of a restricted standard of education. Such a cycle meant that many poor children are ill adapted to academic study and the school experience becomes mostly a requirement for them to attend rather than an encouragement for

them to study so as to be able to find a route out of poverty. Due to their poor living conditions, those children lacked the cultural capital that children from higher socio-economic backgrounds enjoy.

As stated earlier, although the state provision of education at primary and secondary level is free and mandatory for many poor families it is the provision of school uniforms and school materials that make it difficult for them to send their children to school. It was regularly stated that children missed school because of a lack of shoes or pencils or other materials that the parents simply did not have the means to purchase. Parents do not have the means to buy new school uniforms and shoes each year.

In some schools children have benefited from school materials and school uniforms supplied to them by the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups. However, this provision is not general and there were many families who did not benefit from the programme even though they were low income families. In few cases children have not benefited from this service though they are from very low income families. For some poor families it is a choice between shoes, clothes, school materials or food as evidenced in this typical quote:

Sarajini: "mo zanfan pas fine gagne materiel scolaire..., zis parce qui li amene so dipain l'école..."

The indication is that it is not a lack of incentive for poor parents to send their children to school but their desire to do so is hampered by the lack of money to purchase food for the child's breakfast or lunch, shoes, clothes and school materials.

Notwithstanding the above, the provision of free school transport has meant that schooling for many poor children has become more regular. Nevertheless, there remain many children who, even though school transport is free, do not have access to it because of the remoteness of the areas in which they live. Those living in such remote areas still need to find money to meet the cost of school transport; a sum that equates to a substantial proportion of their income (if they have any). This is heightened where a family has a handicapped child who might need constant supervision or may need a parent to accompany them to schools, which will add significantly to the amount of money required to find to cover the cost of transport.

Such a reality indicates how the perception that there is an absence of interest in education among many of the poor is actually predicated upon an inability for families to fulfill their desire for their children to gain a decent education.

Where children from poor families do attend school their parents do attend parent teachers meetings and most parents were aware of the importance of schooling. However, as indicated above their ability to assist their child with their schooling is limited given their own likelihood of having a personal low level of education. For others, time is an issue as they take on multiple poorly paid jobs in order to pay for their children's education.

Economic downturns have led to the closing down of many factories, which has, in turn, led to a rise in unemployment. For the children of such households it is not uncommon for them to have started school but for their attendance at school to have fallen down with the impoverishment of the household due to unemployment.

Marital or family instability was also noted to play a role in affecting school attendance. Where there is only one parent it is often difficult to find help and assistance with childcare in addition to the problem of finding an income. The solution is often to keep children away from school. In such situations it is common for an elder sibling to take on a role acting *in loco parentis*. Subsequently their own education can end prematurely as they take on the role of child care and looking after the household.

In some of the fieldwork exercises it was clear that alcohol abuse by the adults in the community was also an issue. This not only affects the ability of the adults to provide for and to care for the children but also acts as a socialization process that leads to many of the children taking up alcohol abuse at a young age and replicating the problem.

Where there used to be a high number of school drop outs in the poorest areas of the country this has decreased with the opening of many technical and vocational schools. For those pupils who do not perform well academically in primary schools there is the opportunity to attend a technical or vocational school for secondary studies.

It was very common during the fieldwork to find that at least one child in a family of secondary school age was attending a vocational or technical school. However, this did not mean that all problems were solved as there was still the issue of the additional costs implicit in education and in some cases it was found that a child had stopped school because the household could not afford to pay for exam fees.

While some of the factors affecting the quality of life of the poor can be put down to simply being poor it was also noted that many of the poorest households were unaware of services that were offered by relevant ministries or other governmental bodies.

4.2 Health

The majority of the participants appeared to be in good health at the time of the interviews. However, this should not be taken as an indication that poor people are generally in good health. There are many obvious reasons why participants would generally be healthy not least of which is that those in poor health at the time of the interviews would be unlikely to turn up to participate.

It was noted that there were some general health problems reported that were not necessarily poverty related such as diabetes and epilepsy and instances of physical handicap. Nevertheless, although not caused directly by poverty such health related problems can determine that it will be difficult for those sufferers in poverty to find a route of it as these illnesses and handicaps would lessen their opportunities of gaining employment.

In general, the participants did have access to health services except in very remote regions, by Mauritian standards, such as Panchavati. Accordingly there was a general feeling of satisfaction with the health services that were provided, although given that most of the people interviewed were unlikely to have experienced more elaborate health care services it was a loaded question in that they had nothing with which to compare the standard of service offered.

Those who had chronic health problems highlighted the effect this had on their work opportunities and believed that they were permanently dependent on drawing social security allowances. In many instances there was only one person working in a household resulting in a meager wage being all that was available for the wellbeing of the whole household. In such instances it was not uncommon for such people to hold down multiple poorly paid but labour intensive jobs to extend their income opportunities, although even by so doing they could not lift themselves or their family out of poverty.

Many participants did speak of food shortages although it was only in a minority of instances that this could be said to be critical. Nevertheless, instances were given where children were

resorting to looking for extra food in bins and dumping grounds. This has the potential for obvious consequences on their health and on the development of their self esteem.



Plate 1: poor conditions representing breeding grounds for diseases

4.3 Reproductive Health

In most of the poor households from where the respondents came there was a tendency for girls to marry early. Although there was a general awareness of available contraception methods the birth rate among young poor females was quite high with first births tending to occur early. This was particularly noted in Rodrigues where there is also a tendency to serial monogamous relationships resulting in young women having several children with different fathers who tended to be absent from the household.

For those in the younger age groups it was common for early sexual activity to take place while, because of their being unemployed and unlikely to have finished their schooling they had not been exposed to a sufficiently in depth sexual education.

4.4 Nutrition



Plate 2: Manioc grown as a means of subsistence

For the participants engaged in the fieldwork malnutrition was not a real issue although poor nutrition was. Those living in conditions of relative poverty in Mauritius, although their standard of living is relatively low it is not normally life threatening as would be the case for those living in absolute poverty. There were many instances given where there were shortages or absence of certain foods in some households but there were no real instances where the shortage of any food was putting the members of the household at risk of starvation.

For many respondents it was noted that there were instances of under nourishment and poor nutrition. This was most pertinent where it was applicable to children, many of whom were at risk of being deficient in foods essential to physical and mental development. The main issue was also that given that there would be one meal per day many children were going to school hungry or were missing school because they had nothing to eat in the morning. Participants did generally indicate their awareness that the foods they could afford to buy were of poor quality and of poor nutritional value but that the main factor for them was cost rather than nutritional quality.

It was generally prevalent in the fieldwork that milk and dairy consumption was decreasing almost to the point of non-existence in many of the poor households. This was a real issue in households where there were children who very rarely, if at all, consumed milk or milk based products.

By way of example it was common for respondents to state that their household could afford just on pack of milk per month, which was to be rationed among the whole family. In other households they were able to afford two packs of milk per month.

The results of the fieldwork exercises show that, for poorer households in the country it is common for plain tea to be drunk as milk is conserved for cooking or for a rare drink with milk in it.

It was common for poor families to give children plain water and sugar ("de l'eau du sucre"). Budgeting was a constant concern for poor families and for most the money available to the household would not cover their outgoings. This is illustrated by the example given below that reflects many statements made during the fieldwork.

"Casse pas assez. Avec sa mo paye electricité, mo de l'eau. Faudrè ena casse pu acheter ena casse pou acheter di lait, 200-300 roupies sa meme aster ration"
(the money available is not enough. With that money I pay for electricity and water. Its essential to They have money in order to buy milk. Rs 200 or Rs 300 that's all there is to buy food).

Almost every household with school aged children indicated that they relied on school bread. A typical lunch would consist of just plain bread and butter while a typical dinner would consist of what is commonly known as "*bouillon brède and pomme de terre frire*" (Mauritian soup made with greens and fried potatoes). For many of the poorer households the meal would consist of dry bread only.

Where meat was eaten it was most likely to be chicken while fish consumption was more common in than any form of meat. Although fish is relatively expensive to buy in Mauritius most of the poorest communities lived close to the sea and so some form of fishing was conducted. The consumption of eggs was rare in poor households and was dependent upon keeping chickens.

However, in many poor communities the ability to fish has been affected by hotel development and, most recently, the development of IRS housing and golf courses. It was noted that fish were becoming increasingly rare in the lagoons with the disturbance caused by tourist developments and the related tourist activities.

The consumption of fruit was noted to be very rare and irregular among the poor. It was not unusual for respondents to report that they ate fruit perhaps once a month. For the majority of respondents it was unlikely to be more often than once per week.

Fruit was regarded by the poor as a luxury food and it was very rare for children to eat it. The main source of fruits was from tree in the locality and these were consumed seasonally. The most common fruit consumed was Papaya as this tended to grow everywhere while although there were many mango and litchi trees growing these fruits were harvested for sale.

Although many respondents regularly ate vegetable these tended to be home grown or gathered rather than bought. When vegetables were purchased it was necessary to buy only the cheapest available.

In general it was with rice and pulses that were used to bulk out meals, although according to many respondents these were becoming increasingly expensive necessitating the inevitable cutbacks.

4.5 *Income*

The participants in this exercise lived in households with incomes that were less than R10,000 per month with many living on much less than that. For families that relied on fishing as a source of income it was common for their total household income to be less than R300 per day on a good day with bad days ranging from nothing to R200. Even when the catch was good the income was intermittent as the fishing relied on weather condition. Others who derived an income from occupations such as gardening or small scale sugar planting averaged around R4,000 per month in household income.



Plate 3: Rearing activities carried out as a source of income

In general where people from poor communities do find work it tended to be unskilled and poorly paid such as working as lorry helpers, as labourers on building sites or, for women, as maids. Those who worked in the sugar industry did find themselves more well off but such jobs were rare amongst the poorest communities. Around half of the respondents that did have an occupation that brought in an income worked in multiple jobs, usually unskilled, manual and poorly paid. Some supplemented their income by fishing while others worked overtime or extra jobs in order to be able to afford to pay for private tuitions for their children. Even by making such efforts their households remained poor.

What income was generated was barely enough to cover the cost of purchasing basic necessities such as food and making payments of electricity and rent. In fact, it was surprising to hear how much people paid in rent per month when one saw the conditions of the shacks that they lived in. Since income is low and household size is large there is no money left for savings.

4.6 Infrastructure

The respondents generally lived in areas with poor or almost non-existent infrastructure. In many instances footpaths worn by in the mud by constant use were the main roads in poor

communities. These are often washed out, or run with filth and rubbish during heavy rain, and the fetid water enters the houses. Many of the houses were built with recycled tin sheets that were full of nail holes which leaked during rain and is what not uncommon for people to be sleeping on damp bedding.

Stagnant water is also a problem; potholes in pathways and abandoned drums or other receptacles litter some of the more impoverished areas and they fill with water that rapidly becomes stagnant and a breeding pool for mosquitoes. Flooding and water accumulation is also a reason why, during wet periods, the children of such areas are unable to go to school.

Although many people living in such areas have access to electricity and water many do not. They have to use candle light to illuminate the darkness and have to walk to standpipes to access water. In some areas even these standpipes have been rendered inactive by the water authorities.



Plate 4: The infrastructure that the poor have access to.

4.7 *Gender*

In poor areas gender inequality still prevails .Females tend to have less schooling than males as when money is short the decision is often to make efforts to keep males in schooling to the detriment of females. It is also often expected that young females engage in informal caring such as looking after younger siblings, the sick and the aged which necessitates their stopping school. Where women in poor communities were in employment they earned less than males even though some of the occupations in which they were engaged were arduous.

4.8 *Housing conditions*

Most, if not all of the families encountered lived in deplorable conditions with some living in such conditions for 25 years or more. Shacks tended to be packed in to small spaces with the only communal living space outside. The general conditions of the properties were rusty tin peppered with holes that leaked during the rain. The houses tended to be small in size with at best two roughs created by roughly dividing a main room with a tin sheet and wooden pole wall. Nevertheless, some of these properties were home to several people with it not uncommon for five or more people to be sharing a two room tin shack measuring perhaps four metres by 3 metres. Some had basic kitchen areas squeezed into an available space comprising of a one or two ring gas ring cooker. However, for many, particularly in Rodrigues, the kitchens were wood fires outside the house. Sanitation in the houses was non-existent – some of the more fortunate had access to a standpipe outside of the house while others had to collect water and store in drums. Toilet facilities were rough hewn pit latrines with a tin cover. These were shared by several households. Such unhygienic conditions as these represent breeding grounds for vector diseases. In Rodrigues conditions tended to be worse than in Mauritius.

Nevertheless, many of the poor were making efforts to make their living conditions as bearable as possible by putting a lot of effort into keeping the house as clean as possible in the circumstances and by clearing areas for small kitchen gardens.

Those who did not have a proper house expressed their want for one like the following interviewee.

“Madame malade bisin tini. Zenfan rester coum sa meme. Grand merci noun gagne Ça pou cyclone. Quand la pluie tout de l’eau rentre dan la cazenou pas ena droit met ene toilette, ene salle de bain ”

This man’s wife is sick and they have to live like that. Though they have been able to build a house during rainfall water gets into their house .Moreover they do not have the right to build a toilet and bath room.

The main concern of poor respondents was with the housing conditions. The waiting time for them to receive “dibois øle ” housing with corrugated iron sheets varied from one month to several years depending upon their connections.



Plate 5: A typical kitchen in a poor house.

Opinions of the input from the authorities were mixed. In many areas the respondents stated that they never saw anybody from the various organisations charged with alleviating poverty. Some said that they did but it appeared to rest upon luck – whether or not the field officer responsible for their region was active in visiting and arranging for the provisions of the relevant materials or not. For many, they felt that officers of the various organisations never left their office to visit them in the field.

In summary, the conditions that many of the poor live in are insanitary and unsafe. Wiring, where it is present, tends to be haphazard and others are at risk from burning candles in a crowded and flammable space to illuminate the evening. The sanitary conditions are archaic with pit latrines the most common form of toileting facilities and with little or no available running water. The houses also leak during the rain and prone to flooding during which time the water carries rubbish and ordure into the houses.

And for this standard of housing many of the poor were paying monthly rents of up to R1,000.

4.9 *Land ownership*

Those of the poor who are squatting on state land do not have the right to live where they are. In order to benefit from the receipt of construction materials from the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups they had to be housed in area that was not considered as squatting. Therefore, most of the poorest of the poor are outside of the help of the agencies set up to eradicate poverty.

The housing projects that were being built for the re-housing of squatters and the poor were situated far from their current home and tended to be inland; not an attractive proposition for a family that relies on fishing for a significant part of their income and sustenance. Others who lived along the coast were angry that they were having to move on land that had been almost ancestral in its usage to make room for the development of properties to be marketed to foreign investors. For them there was little evidence of social unity even though they were proud that they were Mauritian they had no rights to continue to live in their homes that stood on land soon to be sold for housing developments for rich foreigners.

For those in such a situation the road out of poverty appears to be blocked at all turns as they are disqualified from accessing services that would assist them in addressing their situation.

4.10 Access to services

Although there is a wealth of services set up to assist the poor most of the poorest families remain ineligible to access them. Where households were eligible to access service there was a wave of resentment that the services are not offered to them and that they are difficult to access. This appeared to be a problem at the case officer level.



Plate 6: Typical rearing activities carried by the poor

The most common programme cited by the participants was the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable groups followed by Empowerment Programme, Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme and the Decentralised Cooperation Programme although many claimed not to have heard of any of the programmes.

Many of the poor were simply unaware of the services and assistance to which they were entitled meaning that they were unlikely to access programmes designed to assist them in resolving their hardship.

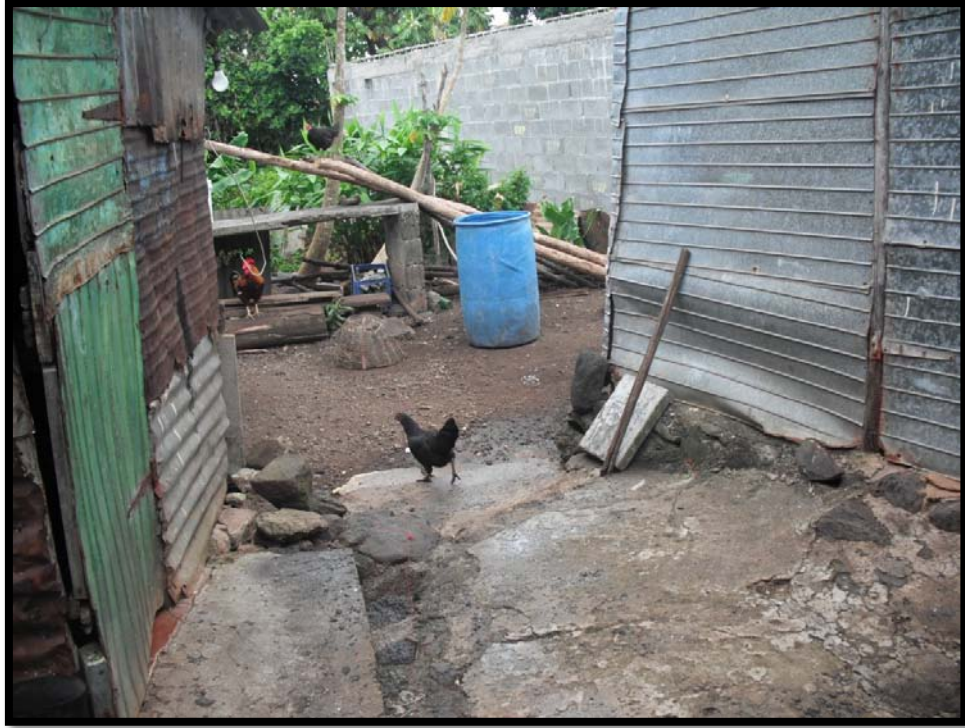


Plate 7: Traditional rearing activities.

4.11 Transport

The inability of many of the poor to access services and employment can be an important element in the creation of social exclusion. Many also felt excluded because of a lack of access to transport which was beyond their means to meet the cost of tickets.

Some participants indicated how it was difficult to find employment because of the difficulty of travelling to work from where they lived given that public transport was expensive.



Plate 8: Remoteness of areas.

4.12 Leisure

The leisure opportunities of people living in such impoverished conditions were severely limited. The cost of transport was a key factor in restricting leisure while the cost of entry to such events as the cinema was prohibitive. Even though Mauritius is surrounded by the sea going to the seaside was unaffordable as the cost of transport and refreshments was simply beyond their means. In many of the poor areas the only social space is the communal outside area and in bad weather even this is inaccessible. Social and sports facilities are lacking and other leisure facilities in the area were beyond their means of paying for entry.

4.13 Informal Credit

It was reported by many participants that informal credit facilities from the corner shop were now almost impossible to achieve. Supermarkets were putting many of such shops out of business while other corner shop owners, aware of the financial straits that such people were in, would not offer informal credit as it was unlikely that the debt would ever be met given that earning potential of the poorest customers was low.

Analysis

5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 *Introduction*

This chapter provides an analysis of findings from the fieldwork carried out by the Poverty Observatory. In fact, there is a complex interaction that exists among different poverty traps. This means that one factor is likely to have an impact on other factors. As such the poor are kept into a poverty trap instead of moving out of it. For example poor household have a low income earning potential and less disposable income to spend on education. This results in children from poor backgrounds achieving low educational levels. There is thus a positive relationship between educational achievement and employment possibilities that is more likely in turn to result in the poor being illiterate and less employable. Moreover, there is positive correlation between high fertility, crime, alcohol and drugs abuse and domestic violence. These factors therefore reinforce and reduce the ability of the poor to exit poverty traps. This clearly shows the inter-link between the factors, the following paragraphs will elaborate on these.

Information gathered from the field work was analysed using techniques of qualitative data analysis. Information was grouped into themes. Similarities, differences, trends among the different groups were all grouped for analysis. Analysis was carried out using techniques commonly used for qualitative data. However, quantitative information was also used to either support the information collected.

As pointed out by Sen (1992) poverty is viewed as a lack of capability to function effectively in society thus one must consider the relationship between these different factors to determine how poverty affects the poor and what are the end results of it. Thus, poverty in our analysis is not viewed solely in terms of income poverty but in terms of human poverty as well that takes into account education, health, nutrition, employment opportunities, and access to resources and services.

5.2 *Analysis of PO Findings*

Education provides an avenue for social mobility. The provision of free education in both Mauritius and Rodrigues has enabled poor families to have access to education which would not have been the case had it not been free, however, there are many expenses which the poor

cannot afford such that it would be quite difficult to get out from the absolute poverty state in which they are in. This same point was made by Sen (1992) whereby absolute poverty was viewed in terms of absence of inadequate resources such that learning is hampered with adequate food, health, home circumstances, as well as a lack of books, inadequate lighting, or places to do homework and parental education.⁴ This clearly applies here as parents were unable help their offspring because they were not that much educated such that they were disinterested in their child's education. Subsequently, this hinders the progress of the child to higher level of education clearly shown from the case studies. Hence, it is not the education system that prevents social mobility rather it is the poverty state that they live in that prevent them to move up.

In contrast to absolute poverty, Sen (1992) further argues that relative poverty demotivates the relatively poor as well as their ability to gain full benefits from education. Among a few there were demotivation in addition to disinterest in most cases the poor also took advantage of education they received. For instance, though they were unable to reach higher classes, the level of education they had enabled them to gain access to technical and vocational schools. In the vast majority of houses there were at least two children who attended technical and vocational schools resulting in them better able to find jobs later in the same field.

Education was seen as a tool to reduce poverty in a number of ways. . Indeed, Mauritius in comparison to African countries has achieved progress due to our literacy level. This is clearly pointed out in literatures whereby it is argued that more educated people are likely to get better job, are productive and are able to secure better jobs in contrast to the views held in international literature that establishes no causal relationship between educational attainment and economic growth. Recent study however demonstrates causal relationship between education and poverty. Quality adjusted information is therefore vital for economic growth .With better education this improves the economic growth thereby generating economic opportunities and incomes. From the findings it was noticed that some of them were at least able to find a job even if they are not the best or highly paid. For instance, from a gender perspective, for example, girl's education are likely to bring social benefits that improves the poor situation as there are lower fertility and greater participation of women in the labour market.⁵ . In practice however it was observed that not all women from this category had the opportunity to take advantage of economic opportunities. Among women it was clearly noticed

⁴ http://www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Info_Services_Publications/pdf/2009/EdPol10.pdfpg5

⁵ See previous footnote

there was high fertility rate with big households which could have been lower if they have benefited more from education and attain high classes which was not the case.

In other instances it was further observed that economic opportunities were not held by everyone. Among those interviewed it was found that though they might live in a region very often they were not recruited for jobs such as by hotels which were in the vicinity from where they live. People from other regions were recruited instead of them consequently they felt excluded. This was because they had a low level of education. Had they been more educated they could have possibly been employed. Hence instead, of having only one person per household employed which would have been a desirable situation none of them were.

Another interesting observation made was that the poor were seen to be very cost sensitive. Many could not attend high classes because of the associated cost of schooling. This was particularly true for girls. While among the parents this was more frequent, in the present generation this is less. At present still girls upon reaching high classes cannot continue schooling due to the high schooling cost in terms of tuition and exam fees which need to be spent on them. This view is shared by Van der Berg (2008) who states that though people were living in a relative state of poverty they could not afford to pay for it as they were cost sensitive which is relevant here.

From the interview conducted it can be seen that everyone was satisfied with the health services offered. This has helped many people including the poor. However, what needs to be pointed is that as most of the interviewees are undernourished as such in the long run this can have an impact on their health. Poverty creates ill- health as people are compelled to live in environments that can make them sick in the absence of a proper shelter, inadequate food, clean water and lack of proper sanitation.⁶

In developing countries there is a need to break the vicious cycle of poverty and ill health needs to be addressed as it is a precondition for development to take place. To address the poverty and ill health issue there needs more than just addressing diseases and nutrition in fact other actions must simultaneously complement them in education, water and sanitation.

At international level the impact of poverty on health has been the focus of public health. Accordingly, it has been observed that poor people are less likely to receive health care, they also receive less contacts with physicians and less access to preventive health care such as

⁶ <http://www.who.int/hdp/poverty/en/.21> May 2010

cancer screening. As such, people living in poverty have a higher prevalence of disability and chronic health disease and shorter life expectancy than people with higher income.⁷

At this stage of our study preventive health has not been touched upon in great detail however with a free public health system poor people has access to other preventive health care such as screening or other health care treatment. However, a high prevalence of disability and chronic health disease was for instance noted .With household with disabled adults for example, they could not work whereas for disable children there was a constant need of a carer to accompany them to school resulting in parents having to spend money on their transport cost which many cannot afford. This further led to these children not attending schools at all. Those with chronic health disease cannot work if they suffer from epilepsy or diabetes. This affected the household income which is less in comparison to other poor household without sick people

In fact, there is a complex relationship between poverty and health. The link between poverty and health is affected by many factors that include poor environmental conditions, low education levels and awareness of needed medical care, financial barriers to access some medical services and lack of resources to maintain health status. People who live in poverty live on very restricted income with difficulty in meeting day to day cost of living resulting in less income for other expenses beyond the essentials of food and shelter. People who are poor are less likely to consume food with essential nutrients resulting in ill health.

This clearly applies to the case studies of the Mauritian poor. According to previous studies carried out it has been found that the low educational level may cause unawareness of needed medical care. There was clearly a lack of resources to maintain health status. Basically, among many of them the food consumed lack important nutrients. From the findings it was observed that protein type of food was consumed lesser than food with carbohydrate. No one was able to afford a proper meal. Undernourishment was quite common lacking in fruits and essential dairy products vital for development and maintaining good health.

While in certain schools children are provided with free lunches with balanced diet not all the poor children are benefiting from them. . Those who live on fishing or engage in rearing of chickens are better off than those who do not. While in the recent years there has been sensitization on the need to have a proper diet this does not apply to them. For them it is their survival that matters to make ends meets more than proper nutrition.

⁷ <http://www.answers.com/topic/poverty-and-health> 21 May 2010

For poor people generally, health is regarded as an asset as their income depend on it .If one person is injured or ill the whole household has to suffer because it is regarded as a burden. If one person is ill or injured the whole household becomes trapped with lost income and high health cost. Good health in contrast contributes to economic development through educational attainment and investment, therefore health of the poor should be improved. While there was not many of those cases in our sample on a larger scale this do have an overall impact. The negative impact in terms of a loss of income can be felt at household level. At macro level this represents a loss in productivity.

Concerning reproductive health household size was large. As such, instead of moving out of poverty these people are often trapped in a vicious circle of poverty .Previous studies carried out in this area in Mauritius shows that women's health were affected as they gave birth to low weight babies . Over the years though there has been a marked improvement in the infant mortality rate in Mauritius, this is however still prevalent among this section of the population because this is linked to other factors as well. As seen from our study women had poor nutrition due to poverty and less education. This in turn impacted on their health. In both Mauritius and Rodrigues girls from poor backgrounds tend to marry early in comparison to girls from non-poor background. The child bearing age in this category is also low. Overall statistics in Mauritius show that there has been a reduction in maternal mortality rate. As access to reproductive health has become more widespread with more and better sensitization campaigns on same issue however not among the poor who are still unaware of them. The size of household is comparatively higher to other households. Although there has been an overall decline in fertility rate the needs of poor women have not been addressed fully as shown from the findings.

Research carried out in other countries shows that even though there are contraceptive devices available for purchase, poor women may not have the information about the effectiveness and safety of particular methods.⁸ This clearly applies here whereby poor reproductive health outcome is undermining the chances of these poor to escape poverty.

Evidence shows that population growth affects poverty Here this is exacerbated as different factors such as early pregnancy, unintended pregnancy together with excess fertility (when actual birth exceed desired fertility) are affecting not only women but their children and the family as a whole to escape poverty. If poverty are to addressed education should take place

⁸ <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/HEALTHNUTRITIONANDPOPULATION/Resources/281627-1095698140167/GreenePovertyReductionFinal.pdf> 24 May 2010

among them as there is a correlation between poverty and education that can be established from this study.

Poor reproductive health makes it difficult for the family and children to escape poverty consequently there is no mobility among them. Not only is the educational outcome of the mother poor but this is similar with the children as well who may drop out of school thus having less schooling as found in some cases where children, mostly girls, left schools to look after young siblings. Similarly women stayed at home to take care of their children.

A further outcome of poor reproductive health is the consumption pattern of the family which is being altered to rear the child. The participation of women in the labour market is at the same time being altered. This is worsened if there is a single parent who has to cater for the whole family. Though, we have not come across cases of teen pregnancy this may well occur with unawareness as well as low level of education.

Due to poverty very often there was either insufficient food for the family or simply undernourishment. As they were just able to buy only the basic necessities they consistently consume nutritionally risky diets. Both adults and children were subsisting on diets which were low in vitamins, minerals, fruits, vegetables, pulses and meat. As can be seen clearly the consumption of meat was very rare or even inexistent while that of milk was slightly higher.

Micronutrient deficiency was present in their diet lacking in essential proteins, fruits and minerals compensated with food with high fat content. Research shows that low quality diet characterized by large amount of fat and refined sugar predisposed people to heart disease. This is particularly serious here since Mauritius has a high rate of people with diabetes and heart disease which are affecting all sections of the population. Due to these types of chronic diseases therefore they may be unable to work thus leading to less income for the family.

If there is proper nutrition this is beneficial for the sustained mental, physical and social development of the person. In fact some researchers have aggregated how under nutrition affect the fetal and children later in school with regards to their cognitive ability, educational attainment, productivity and earnings.⁹ Though this was beyond the scope of this study there is a high economic cost to these. Similarly diet related disease also have a heavy economic cost. Among them it was found that children did not attend school as they did not have lunch to bring to school.

⁹ http://www.unscn.org/files/Publications/Briefs_on_Nutrition/Brief8_EN.pdf, 24 May 2010

Malnutrition is not that much prevalent in Mauritius compared to Africa yet as this is quite serious among the poor communities therefore actions in favour of poverty reduction should look at this. What is surprising is the fact that there are some whose livelihood depend on fishing. With recent development in the coastal region they are not able to fish. Apart from that they also fish for their own consumption. On the one hand this situation is negatively impacting on their income while on the other hand this also affect their food consumption which is poor thus if poverty and nutrition needs to be improved obviously this aspect must be considered.

Concerning income of the poor statistics shows that inequality of income has decreased and that income of the poor has experienced a rise compared to income of the non poor. From our study it can be seen that even if two people work in a house their income would not be more than Rs10,000. In the majority of cases the income of the poor would not exceed Rs7, 000. As the relative size of household was large this was not sufficient to cater for the needs of the whole family.

Statistics further revealed that there has been a fall in poverty among the elderly compared to the rest of the population. It was noticed that in a few cases though household were large they were extended thus elderly people could contribute to household expenses through their income. There were cases where children were left with their grandparents to be taken care of. Here if there was a single grandparent to look after many grandchildren their income proved to be insufficient.

It is generally recognized that money income does not totally capture the economic well being of well being of individuals and families. Families and individual could well benefit from non-cash benefits in the form of subsidies such as food stamps or housing subsidies. There are schemes for housing however due to low income people are still not able to build a house. Within household with working children the latter are able to contribute to household income to some extent. Moreover though in the last years there has been an increase in income there has been a decrease in the purchasing power of the poor. The poor and the poorest of the poor are unable to cope with this new situation. Thus it is very unlikely that they will move up from their poverty situation. Their situation is still the same with them having recourse to multiple jobs with no job security in order to make ends meet.

On the infrastructural side if poverty is to be reduced access to services must be provided to the poor in terms of water and sanitation. Public sector reforms with investment in physical

infrastructure will contribute significantly to the pursuit of socially inclusive development. With development occurring throughout the island there has been improvement in infrastructure however in some respects in poor areas the level of infrastructure is poor with muddy pathways access. Infrastructural development affects productivity directly despite different school of thoughts who argue the contrary. Empirical evidence of econometric studies points out that there is a direct link between economic growth, economic welfare with access to improved infrastructure. Studies in different countries have shown this positive relationship. For example, research in Vietnam shows that poor households living in rural communes with paved roads have a 67% higher probability of escaping poverty than those in communes without paved roads¹⁰. In other words, improved infrastructure has a multiplier effect on the economy. As such donor communities financing projects for poverty alleviation should take this into account in their actions towards poverty reduction.

Nowadays, it has become a necessity for everyone to live in a decent house. The absence of a proper house can lead to a decrease in productivity. For instance the challenge that faces Mauritian poor is based on a question of affordability. This is seen as a serious problem because on the one hand those who are renting a house were left with less money to spend on food or clothing. Those who are even unable to rent a house were squatting or occupying land illegally. The poor are living in conditions which are worse as can be seen from our findings. In these houses it can be observed that this environment is not conducive for learning. As the living conditions of the poor is even poorer this affects other factors such as educational attainment and social mobility. From our research the general educational attainment was mixed, there were fewer who perform well, the remaining were average and poor performers. In addition to this overcrowding in houses can this can affect the social and psychological development of people living in them as well

Poor housing conditions lacked basic amenities. Although there is low cost housing in reality not everyone could afford it because of their low income. This type of situation needs to be addressed not only because it will help to curb down poverty but it will also address the well-being of the next generation. This must take place because the poor people are living in a condition whereby they are at a social disadvantage in relation to others and therefore this can lead to social disintegration if this is not addressed.

Land ownership up to now has remained one of the most controversial issue. It would be interesting to note the difference that land transfer would make. While land in some parts of

¹⁰ http://www.adb.org/Documents/EDRC/Policy_Briefs/PB013.pdf 25 May 2010

the island are being sold to wealthy foreigners these poor claimed that they no longer have the right to live on them. Since they are occupying land illegally they are unable to benefit from a whole panoply of other public services in the form of informal credit to start small scale projects. In other words land ownership constrain their access to other livelihood assets. If there is improved distribution of land this can dramatically improve their situation. As can be seen from the case studies on the one hand with recent development this has affected the fishing community such that they cannot fish as before. On the other hand they are constrained by land ownership to engage in rearing or other other activities to obtain additional income. Hence, in effect there is no way for them to escape their poverty trap

While squatting still remains a major issue is because in the last years there has been an influx of wealthy foreigners or new residents on real estates. This is unacceptable among local residents as this has boosted the prices of houses which have consequently become even unaffordable for the middle income families.

Access to transport is another factor which can impede these people to get out of poverty .The cost of tickets are unaffordable to them. Moreover they had difficulty to secure employment because of transport. This situation is unacceptable when so much improvement in this field has taken place in the last years. In the first place some of them are already living in remote areas therefore instead of moving out of their locality this adds to their geographical isolation, this is limiting their participation in labour and product markets and constraining their economic opportunities. In other words, lack of transport infrastructure is contributing to the causes of lack of income and consumption and inability to accumulate social and physical assets.

Lack of transport services and infrastructure can even contribute to the inability of human capabilities as people are unable to access other basic services such as health centres and schools. Here although health services are within their vicinity there are other services which are not.

Provision of transport services and transport infrastructure is therefore integral in attaining a livelihood. Improvements in transport services and infrastructure will enable the poor people to meet economic, social and subsistence needs more easily.¹¹ Also they may be able to delineate themselves from the social, economic and political environment in which they are actually living.

¹¹ http://www.cityshelter.org/13_mobil/Poverty-Transport-World-Bank.pdf 26 May 2010

It is to be pointed out that most of the Millenium Development Goals have been achieved. Despite this many services are still inaccessible to the poor. There are many services which are available in order to help the poor to come out of poverty. There has been an increase in access to water and electricity but this is not so for the poor who do not have access to water, electricity and proper sanitation. The end result of this is that they are living in environments which are breeding grounds for epidemics. Services which are set up for them in most cases still remains beyond the realms of the poor because of their illegal ownership of land and also because of unawareness of other services. They are unable to benefit from services meant to benefit them to help them to come out of this precarious situation that is the benefit incidence analysis of these services are much lower. Poverty reduction strategies exclude the poor. Hence the poor are not empowered rather they are disempowered.

It was generally observed that there were mostly girls who stayed at home to look after grandparents and younger siblings while their parents were at work or were involved in multiple jobs. With their schooling being disturbed at this stage this recreates a situation of intergenerational poverty. Later on their risk of facing poverty is greater because of the discrimination they face in education, employment and control of assets. This further result in them facing other persistent discrimination when they apply for informal credit as they are in low paid, insecure jobs. This reinforces their vulnerability. The economic security of women must be improved to avoid gender disparities and address feminization of poverty. Simultaneously, this will lead to both empowerment of the poor and women empowerment.

It can be said that the poor are unable to come out of their poverty trap as they are excluded from social networks that are necessary to obtain loans. Poverty thus becomes persistent. With the poor no longer able to benefit from informal credit the detrimental effect of this is disproportionately felt by the poor rather than the non -poor. In order to address this issue improvement of other factors must take place.

With globalization the gap between the rich and the poor has widened that is the have and the have nots. Market forces are seen to be incapable of addressing this issue. While the income of the rich is progressing those of the poor is not they are becoming poorer.

The labour market on its side is seen to be instable of competition. The life cycle of many enterprises is comparatively low such that they do not offer job security for many workers. As people lose their jobs it becomes difficult for them to be retrained and shift to other occupations. In the meantime they are deprived of their normal income.

Given their low level of education it is not only difficult to retrain them but many jobs require in the new emerging sectors require highly skilled labour thus the training needs of these people should be properly addressed so that they may not find themselves unemployed and not able to adapt to the new trend.

Regarding leisure as these people were poor their access to leisure was limited. For example leisure activities such as outdoor games and other activities such as going to the beach were unaffordable because of transport cost. In the absence of leisure there was idleness that affected their social and psychological development.

In conclusion as many factors affect poverty a lack or an absence of one factor was seen to have a repercussion on other factors thus influencing the poverty trap in which these people were in. Therefore to address poverty a holistic approach must be adopted to tackle each of them.

Conclusion

CONCLUSION

The areas from where the interviewees were selected really represent the poor and the poorest of the poor in Mauritius. Following the interviews carried out among the poor and the poorest of the poor based on the qualitative methodology describing their social experience there are both positive and negative outcomes noted.

It has become increasingly difficult for the poor and the poorest of the poor to live on the minimum income they have. Income is spent on necessities and less income is available to spend on other items. There is therefore no income left for savings.

While satisfaction has been noted for health as this is the only standard they can compare with these poor are still living in precarious conditions. The housing conditions are relatively poor occupied by many persons. The larger the household the poorer the conditions are. In addition to that, land ownership still remains one of the thorniest issues that have not been resolved. Also with tourist development taking place this is having a negative impact on the livelihood of many especially those who live along the coast and rely on fishing as a means of livelihood.

As regards nutrition it has been found that while protein constitute an important source of food the diet of most of them lacks it instead diets with high fat content are consumed. While emphasis has been put on the importance of consuming a balanced this is hardly affordable for many. Fruits are rarely consumed and they can be regarded as luxuries. As these people are not properly nourished this has an incidence on their health and for women this has an impact on their reproductive health.

While education is free providing an avenue for social mobility these children do not benefit fully from it as they live in a poverty environment whereby there is parental disinterest in the education of their children. While some tend to drop out of school at an early age the majority of them continue their schooling as there are technical and vocational schools that they can join. Subsequently they are trained and better able to find a job. However, it was also found that most of them were in low paid and insecure jobs. There was a high concentration of them working in the informal sector and having recourse to multiple jobs in order to sustain themselves and their families.

From a gender perspective the burden was worse for girls as they tend to leave school early to look after sick grandparents or after young siblings while parents are busy involved in multiple

jobs. Moreover, as they leave school early they tend to marry early. In the absence of a proper education and unawareness there is a tendency towards big household. Household income is clearly insufficient to cater for the needs of the whole family. Furthermore as they are unaware of many services they do not benefit from them. In spite of the fact that there are programmes and funds that have been set up they rarely benefit the poor. Despite the fact they are pro poor in they are not addressing and helping to curb down poverty.

What can be seen therefore is that poverty cannot be looked at in isolation. This is because many factors are interlinked. Hence policies in one area are likely to have repercussions in other areas. Policies therefore should be pro poor. If resources are properly channeled the problem of poverty can be resolved.

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