



Participate

Knowledge from the margins for **post-2015**



What matters most?

Evidence from 84 participatory studies with those living with extreme poverty and marginalisation

The Participate Initiative

The *Participate* initiative is providing high quality evidence on the reality of poverty at ground level, bringing the perspectives of the poorest into the post-2015 debate. *Participate* aims to:

- Bring perspectives of those in poverty into decision-making processes;
- Embed participatory research in global policymaking;
- Use research with the poorest as the basis for advocacy with decision-makers;
- Ensure that marginalised people have a central role in holding decision-makers to account in the post-2015 process;
- Generate knowledge, understanding and relationships for the global public good.

Acronyms	
ATD	All Together for Dignity
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CESESMA	Centro de Servicios Educativos en Salud y Medio Ambiente (Centre for Education in Health and Environment)
CLTS	Community-Led Total Sanitation
DFID	Department for International Development (UK government)
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GM	Genetically modified
GPRS	Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy
HA	Health Authority
HHH	Host household in the RCA
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
INSS	Mozambican National Institute for Social Security
LC	Local Council
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MDG(s)	Millennium Development Goals
MFDC	Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance in Senegal
MiDA	Millennium Development Authority
MRU	Manon River Union
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services (Karamoja, Uganda)
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NHIS	National Health Insurance Scheme (Ghana)
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PPVA	Participatory Poverty and Vulnerability Assessment
RCA	<i>Reality Checks</i> Approach
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
WTO	World Trade Organization

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Glossary

3F crisis	Food, Fuel and Financial interrelated crises, experienced worldwide. Starting in 2007 and with ongoing impacts
Chapa	Local public transport drivers, Mozambique
Dharna	Method of seeking justice by sitting at the door of one's debtor or wrongdoer and fasting until justice is obtained, India
KA Council	Kahua Association Council, a local CBO in the Solomon Islands
Kazi kwa vijana	(Work for Youth) Kenyan youth employment project
LEAP Ghana	Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty Program is a social cash transfer programme which provides cash and health insurance to extremely poor households across Ghana to alleviate short-term poverty and encourage long-term human capital development
Machamba	Agricultural plot, Mozambique
Panchayat	Village council or assembly in India, consisting of a small number of elders and operating as a dispute and governance mechanism
Paniya	A Scheduled Tribe in India
Sustainable Development	While we are also concerned about issues of environmental sustainability, in this case when we refer to development that is sustainable we mean development processes that will last.

Introduction

A woman attends a demonstration in an IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) camp in DRC. Her placard reads, 'Take time to think about our concerns'.



JENNY MATTHEWSPANOS

This *Participate* report draws on the experiences and views of people living in extreme poverty and marginalisation in 107 countries. It distils messages from 84 participatory research studies published in the last seven years. Forty-seven of these studies are based on creative material coming from visual participatory methods (see Bibliography for full details). A development framework post-2015 will have legitimacy if it responds to the needs of all citizens, in particular those who are most marginalised and face ongoing exclusion from

development processes. The framework has to incorporate shared global challenges and have national level ownership if it is to support meaningful change in the lives of people living in poverty. In an early findings paper prepared for the High Level Panel meeting in Monrovia, we focused on understanding the lessons learnt from people's experiences of predominantly international development assistance. (See Appendix for key messages from the early findings report). This final report merges these findings with learning from the second phase of the synthesis, adding a substantive focus on national and local level policy and development planning and how relationships, and accountability between citizens and governance institutions at these levels can be strengthened through the active engagement of those most marginalised in decision-making.

What do we mean by development?

This report is designed to address issues relating to the setting of a new global development framework for the post-2015 era, once the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have expired. It is concerned with development in its widest sense, i.e. policies and initiatives at local, national, regional and global levels that support the most marginalised people and communities to have hope, dignity, and a better quality of life. These initiatives could be implemented by global development actors (including international aid donors and international NGOs), national and local governments, the private sector, or community and individual self-help. The development landscape is changing and it is likely that the roles, responsibilities and interactions of these actors will be significantly different post-2015, compared to the MDG era.

What can this report legitimately claim?

We have assessed 84 studies, which span 107 countries over several years. This gives significant coverage and allows us to draw out important patterns. Each study is focused on different experiences of poverty and exclusion and they use a variety of different participatory methods. This diversity adds substantial robustness to the patterns that have emerged from the data. We can be confident of the validity of messages that consistently emerge through completely different processes, in very different contexts. However, it is important to be clear that none of these studies were designed to discuss what should replace the MDGs. They were

not tasked with designing or prioritising development goals. What we can discern from these studies is what matters most to people and why. In some cases this can be translated into goals. In other cases it will inform how goals might be framed. Still in other cases it will inform an implementation framework, which we argue is as important as the goals themselves.

What was our approach to this synthesis?

We developed the synthesis in two stages. First, a purposive sample of 12 large-scale multi-country, multi-location programmes was identified in consultation with the synthesis team's global networks.

Selection was made in a non-randomised yet structured way (EPPI-Centre 2007). For inclusion in the synthesis, inclusion and exclusion criteria were clearly defined along the dimensions of:

- 1 *methodological credibility*: how participatory is the study? Is the research analysis anchored in a strongly experiential process? Is it generated through a strongly dialogic process?;
- 2 *validity*: the research is strongly rooted within local communities who feel they have a direct stake in the research; the research is not a one off, it is embedded in a longer-term relationship, or is the foundation for a longer-term relationship;
- 3 *'generalisability'*: the research is multi-site and/or multi-country;
- 4 *relevance*: the research is with people living in poverty or who are from marginal, vulnerable or excluded groups, such as people with disabilities. It can tell us about people's perspectives on poverty and their views on what is important to address in order for change to happen.

Programmes were included in the synthesis and meta-analysis if they fulfilled the criteria. All included projects and programmes were analysed, and research findings compared using an analytical framework to group data and identify key themes and dissonances across cases.

A second phase widened the search, using key search terms and modifiers to identify relevant research, selected for inclusion following the same criteria set out above. The total number of studies identified was 84. In this phase, studies with a stronger national level

component were prioritised; these were analysed under the same analytical framework as phase one and the findings merged here.

A more detailed methodological paper is being produced for the whole of the *Participate* initiative and will be published in due course. Please get in contact with us if you want to know more about the methodology for this synthesis.

A note on the report: Given the breadth of the studies looked at there are a multitude of issues raised that we have not included. The issues included are the ones which occurred time and time again in the studies.

Is this synthesis of participatory research, participatory?

The research we have analysed is all participatory, but the synthesis does not claim to be participatory. It is not possible to synthesise the results of 84 global studies in a way that engages significant numbers of the participants in those studies. Nor would it have been practical even to bring together the research teams. So it is important to be clear that this synthesis has been produced entirely by the *Participate* research team at the Institute of Development Studies. We have tried to let the research speak for itself and draw out the big patterns emerging through the data, but in the end it is our assessment of what those patterns are. We hope that the report itself will be subject to critical scrutiny by those living in poverty. One vehicle for this will be the Ground Level Panels which are being organised within *Participate*, but we would strongly encourage others to read the report and comment on the extent to which it resonates with their experiences from the ground.

This synthesis is part of a larger research endeavour. The next phase involves bringing together the knowledge generated by more than 15 partners of the *Participate Participatory Research Group* (www.ids.ac.uk/publication/participate-global-participatory-research-network-map). These partners are carrying out live participatory work in more than 40 countries across the globe, and their findings will be triangulated with the findings of this synthesis.

«What we can discern from these studies is what matters most to people and why. In some cases this can be translated into goals. In other cases it will inform how goals might be framed»

Narrative summary

Development frequently doesn't reach the very poorest and most marginalised

A strongly recurring message throughout the studies is that the very poorest are less able to access infrastructure, services, support and opportunities. Where services exist, they are sometimes unavailable to the very poorest through a lack of information and knowledge of their existence, lack of transportation, hidden costs, short-term coping strategies which sacrifice long-term needs, along with social norms

«The studies show a resoundingly strong message that local ownership and participation in development processes is absolutely key to success»

which inhibit certain marginalised groups. This report makes key recommendations for approaching this exclusion. Provision of information about rights and opportunities needs to be built into the development process, to ensure that

people in poverty are aware of the options available to them. A greater focus of resources directed towards the most excluded – such as women, isolated indigenous communities and disabled people – should be encouraged, including the possibility of developing flexible and fluid programmes, which may be more able to meet needs. The report recommends a step-by-step approach to development, ensuring that basic needs such as land rights, food, and sanitation are given priority, as these are necessary pre-conditions for accessing services such as education. Development interventions need to be underpinned by a systemic understanding of people's everyday lives and the trade-offs that they have to make. Often relatively small factors such as the costs of a school uniform are what inhibit access. Finally, a greater focus on challenging social norms is strongly recommended, as these can perpetuate exclusion, poverty and unhelpful behaviours, undermining development processes

Development that is sustainable requires meaningful participation that leads to strong local ownership

The studies show a resoundingly strong message that local ownership and participation in development processes is absolutely key to success. Participants repeated again and again their desire and ability to manage their own change processes in a locally understandable, sustainable way. Local knowledge and leveraging existing networks and

institutions have proved to be central solutions expressed by poor people. They emphasise that *how* development interventions happen is as important as *what* development offers – that the process of participation and developing ownership is what makes development sustainable, rather than the technical content of the intervention. In accordance with this, capacity building initiatives that develop skills and confidence were the only ones which were universally advocated for by the poorest and most marginalised people. Participatory methods are shown here to contain a strong element of developing people's skills, confidence and ability to take ownership of answering local needs. This report strongly recommends the use of participatory methods and participation more generally as a means of capacity development leading to local ownership and sustainability. The research also highlighted the importance of wellbeing, dignity and hope in experiences of poverty. Poverty is experienced as stigma as well as material deficiencies, and inequalities in access, anxiety and stress were all mentioned as sources of ill-being. This discussion suggests that an integrated holistic approach which considers wellbeing, empowerment, dignity and capacity as well as material needs is strongly desired by people in poverty.

Poverty is increasingly characterised by uncertainty, crisis, conflict, insecurity and volatility

Many studies identified that lives are increasingly uncertain in the face of climate change, conflict and macro-economic shocks. Increased globalisation means producers and consumers are tied in to the global market and subject to its shocks and stresses. Food price rises have had impacts on consumption and nutrition, which is compounded by falling wages. People's short-term coping strategies often expose them to more risk and vulnerability, such as increased debt. Day-to-day life is often characterised by crisis and emergency, meaning development interventions need to seek new ways to respond to increasing volatility and to bridge the gap between emergency response and sustainable development. Those living in conflicts face even greater disruption and uncertainty. People are displaced; families are broken apart; education for children is disrupted. This sends some into poverty and re-enforces poverty for others. Climate change has had a powerful



destabilising effect on rural livelihoods in many countries. Economic migration is a regularly cited coping strategy and often central to household survival, yet interventions do not regularly recognise the mobile nature of the populations they seek to support. The voices in this report show that there is a need for development to respond to the high mobility of poor people and to innovate ways of supporting migrants and their families.

Poor governance reinforces poverty for the poorest and most marginalised

A highly consistent message across a wide variety of contexts is that governance is a key factor in development. At national level, people living in poverty stated the need for government support in terms of livelihood security and social protection, and the provision of basic services. At the local level, poor government services were a source of frustration and anger. Several studies identified the

need for inclusion of informal and traditional systems of governance in development. These are not without problems of favouritism and corruption, but it is vital to work with existing systems to gain a full contextual understanding. The evidence suggests that what is needed is a holistic approach which removes barriers and creates support mechanisms across the formal and informal domains. Coherence and the integration of different governance levels which allow citizens to participate and give voice is currently lacking, but respondents identified transparent, accountable governance at all levels as central to supporting sustainable development.

Pensioners demonstrate outside the National Bank of Ukraine.

SERGEY MAXIMISHIN/PANOS

Challenging barriers to access

People in greatest poverty face:

- ◆ LACK OF INFORMATION
- ◆ HIDDEN COSTS
- ◆ DISCRIMINATORY SOCIAL NORMS



LIMITED ACCESS TO RESOURCES

DISCRIMINATORY INSTITUTIONS

DISCRIMINATORY SOCIAL NORMS

LACK OF INFORMATION

HIDDEN COSTS



1 Development frequently doesn't reach the very poor and most marginalised

A recurring message that appeared in 63 per cent of these studies is that the very poorest are unable to access the infrastructure, services, support and opportunities that others who are less poor can. This is an important message that even when services are available, they often remain out of reach of the poorest. *Reality Checks* in Mozambique show this quite starkly:

We have met very few poor households who count on the State to improve their situation. Only seven of the 360 households in the Baseline Survey received support in cash or kind from INSS or Acção Social, and all lived in Majune or Cuamba. According to a community leader, most people do not look upon the State as having any obligations to support the poor as households and individuals – despite the fact that most households pay tax. At the same time social protection measures (cash transfers, work schemes etc.) and the '7 million scheme' were usually talked about as if being for the better-off or for people with the right connections (sometimes with a direct reference to 'the Party'). (*Reality Check Mozambique 2011: 38*).

In the Central African Republic, this situation was also evident:

We are forgotten in these conflicts. For example, after the armed conflicts in our villages, organisations would give handouts to support the people who were stripped of their belongings but the people in charge of distributing the goods don't give anything to the poorest people. People use other people's misery to make themselves richer and the help sent by international organizations does not go to the people who really need it. The poorest people keep on suffering. Actor's Group, Central African Republic (ATD Fourth World 2012: 39)

Jean Diène, from Senegal, experiences this as a form of violence:

They come to give rice to some people for six months and don't visit the homes of the poorest.

The way they act separates people, which is a form of violence.
(ATD Fourth World 2012: 51)

Extreme poverty is further compounded by discrimination. A huge 83 per cent of studies (70 out of 84) referred to exclusion and inequality through gender, ethnic, disability or other discrimination. Those who are marginalised are often driven into extreme poverty. The interaction of poverty with social norms that lead to exclusion is addressed in Section 1.5.

Work in India with the Paniya Scheduled Tribe (recognised by the Constitution of India) as historically disadvantaged, illustrates this:

Paniyas view their situation as vicious cycles from which it is difficult to break free... Illness is a major source of vulnerability that leads to poverty by two different paths. The first is direct, which is the incapacity to work. The second, indirect path is

indebtedness incurred by borrowing to pay for health care costs. More in-depth analysis of this trap revealed that the Paniyas overwhelmingly rely on borrowing from outside their community, typically from nearby landowners or from their employers. Consequently they become indebted in terms of labour owed, reproducing historical oppressive relationships. The Paniyas identified several other vulnerability traps related to a range of risk factors, including landlessness, poverty, exposure to harsh environmental conditions (e.g. floods), alcohol use, colony isolation, and education deficits. Once they have fallen into such traps, it becomes increasingly difficult to protect themselves from the various risk factors, thereby further reducing levels of well-being and paving the way for the 'road to destitution.'

(Mohindra et. al. 2010: 6)

«A huge 83 per cent of studies (70 out of 84) referred to exclusion and inequality through gender, ethnic, disability or other discrimination»

In the following sections of this chapter, we identify the key factors that act as barriers to the poorest accessing existing basic services.

1.1 Lack of access

Access is frequently voiced as a major concern for people living in greatest poverty. Many programmes are not well publicised. In some cases, the poorest people simply don't think that social protection programmes are for people like them. In other cases, people lack information about services that could help them. As a result, the most vulnerable groups may be excluded:

«Access is frequently voiced as a major concern for people living in greatest poverty»

In Ghana, we have a lot of programmes that aim to help the vulnerable in society. However, dissemination of information to the vulnerable is always done ineffectively. There is no transparency in the implementation process. GPRS-I, GPRS-II, MiDA and now LEAP are examples of such programs. They were all meant for people like us. But very few of us know what they are about. A massive campaign has to be done to increase transparency in the implementation process. (Korboe 2011: 50)

An additional constraint to accessing programmes is that unskilled workers work long hours and have little time to explore the other opportunities that might be available (for example, by NGOs). Hence, interviews indicated that young unskilled migrants in Ba Dinh and Me Linh knew very little about government or NGOs' activities to support them. 'I only do my work,' said a 19-year-old male migrant in Ba Dinh, 'so I have no idea.' Similarly, a 20-year-old female migrant in Ba Dinh explained: 'Yes, labourers like us really need them [policies and programmes to support them]. However, the state's support cannot happen to us because many state policies are unknown to us. If we do not search the internet, we don't know about them' (Perezniето et al. 2011: 55).

Lack of transport also restricts peoples' access to services: 'The better-off have easier access to public institutions both in the communities and by being more mobile and having better options for relating to the institutions located in the District or Provincial capital' (Reality Check Mozambique 2011: 45). Integrated approaches to transport planning are difficult to achieve. Studies of community transport needs which include participatory approaches have become more common, as a result of NGO and donor pressures for local-level rural accessibility planning (Starkey in Porter and Abane 2008: 154) but 'findings from participatory research seem to have a tendency to disappear under the weight of more pressing (often political) considerations at the implementation stage' (Porter and Abane 2008: 154).

Accessibility problems are compounded when a family member is disabled. Not only do disabled

people find it difficult if not impossible to access services, in some cases, the carer may not be able to leave the disabled person unattended. In other cases, there are great risks involved in navigating busy roads without pavements or adequate crossings (Whitzman et al. 2013: 68–9; James 2012: 18).

Some research has highlighted issues of access for women in particular, finding that 'women's interests are little served by transport ministries, [and] those of their children are almost invisible' (Porter and Abane 2008: 154). The Children, Transport and Mobility project further emphasises access issues, especially for poor girls living in rural areas (Malawi, Ghana and South Africa). Even before girls embark on often long and dangerous journeys to school, many tasks are required of them at home and sometimes en route, such as accompanying younger siblings (for both rural and urban girls). Hazards (physical, human and supernatural – for example fear of ghosts) encountered on the way often result in girls not making it to school at all:

When during the heavy rainfalls we can't cross the river because it is full and I cannot swim like boys do so we don't go to school until the river has subsided.
(Rural girl, Eastern Cape, South Africa, Porter et al. 2011: 69)

The delayed start and difficult journeys often result in late arrival and punishment from teachers. These compound the disincentives to attend and mean that girls will sometimes play truant. Where girls do manage to attend school despite the obstacles, they are often exhausted and therefore unable to perform to their full potential (Porter et al. 2011).

Other examples include the ways in which working hours prevent vulnerable groups from accessing services, for example, migrants working long hours in Vietnam are the least able to access assistance programmes (Perezniето et al. 2011); and the problems of accessing services which require time and money:

For poor and rural Nepalis, the formal judicial system is of little value and largely inaccessible for addressing their day-to-day issues. For these villagers, access requires time, and comes with the cost of travel and the need to hire professionals to help them. In addition, they will often then face district courts notorious for inefficiency, corruption and bias. The problem is especially acute for women who have family obligations or social expectations that keep them close to home. (Lederach and Thapa 2012: 3-5)

1.2 Hidden costs and inadequate services

Reality Check in Bangladesh, Nepal, Indonesia and Mozambique exposes the financial barriers that prevent people living in extreme poverty from accessing education for their children. While primary

education may be free, even 'small' costs such as uniform and photocopies of schoolbooks are inaccessible for the poorest. A one-year study carried out in Ghana, Vietnam and Mozambique found that young people in Ghana 'linked reduction in real household income to adjustments in expenditure, most critically in relation to food consumption and to education ... approximately one in every four young people interviewed mentioned that they, or young people they knew, had stopped going to school because it had become difficult to pay school-related costs' (Perezniето et al. 2011: 39).

This is a common theme across other studies:

There's not enough money to provide children with clothes, shoes and school [supplies]. Doing business is pointless, as the earnings go to taxes and bribes.
(Young woman in Tajikistan, Saferworld 2012c: 21)

Health centres with no supplies and unreliable opening hours are of little help to the poor when they are sick. Treatment that is free of charge becomes unavailable to those who cannot pay a bribe:

If you are with the NHIS, the doctors do not treat you very well. Those with money and without the NHIS card are taken care of very well.
(Young male in Mamooobi, Perezniето et al, 2011)

The Reality Check in Bangladesh research team observed that:

People show a remarkable level of motivation and ingenuity in trying to make the best of their

difficult situations. They are constantly engaged in strategic choice-making and try to manage difficult trade-offs. These efforts are often undermined by low levels of institutional accountability, and by service providers who frequently lack motivation, leading to sub-optimal use of resources. Neither health nor education providers are effectively regulated, particularly in the private and non-governmental sectors. (Reality Check Bangladesh, 2011: 12)

1.3 Impossible trade-offs mean that people have to choose to sacrifice long-term wellbeing to meet short-term needs

The types of trade-offs people have to face range from daily problems like choosing whether or not to miss meals, to long-term decisions to migrate that mean leaving one's children behind often for long periods, to involvement in gangs and conflict in order to get security. In extreme cases, poverty may lead parents to place their child in an orphanage, be fostered or put into bonded labour: 'Parents actually want the best for their children. They are always looking for solutions and the orphanage seems like a good solution' (Jacqueline Plaisir, full-time ATD volunteer, Haiti, ATD 4th World 2012: 37).

Trade-offs in food intake might be made because of low income in combination with debt:

Today I could not earn money so I am fasting. I'll take some food tonight. This is my strategy nowadays. If I have little income I will eat less food. My goal was to reduce my debt and in

Children attending school, Bangladesh



G.M.B. AKASH/PANOS

order to do that I eat less. I have reduced my debt from Tk.12,000 to Tk.10,000 this year. (Female head of household, South urban, *Reality Check* Bangladesh, SIDA 2012a: 14)

Limited (food) resources lead some households to reduce spending in important areas such as education, make decisions to educate only one child or pull children out of school to work. Child researchers that collaborate with the Centre for Education in Health and Environment (CESESMA) in rural Nicaragua corroborate this:

Children have to work in the coffee plantations in order to survive. The overseers recognise that there are many children working on the plantation. They say that their parents send them to work because of the family's economic situation, and exploit them; others have to work because they are orphans. (Young Consultants of Santa Martha 2011: 13)

In rural Cambodia, the extra burden brought by climate shocks is causing poor children to miss school:

Since the climate has changed, our studies have been badly affected. We have to spend more time helping our family in farming and non-farming activities. We don't have much time to study. Hot weather and drought means our family needs to pump water for our rice fields from sources further away than before which our parents cannot manage by themselves. When the situation is urgent we have to miss school to help them out. (Polack 2010: 19)

Overall, the number of young people dropping out, or not completing their cycle of education, has reportedly increased in the past two or three years in both Ghana and Mozambique. ... In Ghana, youth in the 15-18 age group were most concerned about not continuing their education and commonly expressed a wish to receive assistance. 'In terms of education, there was no support; that was why I dropped out ...I did not get enough support for education due to financial problems.' (Young female, in-depth interview, Osu, Ghana). Some interviewees in Mozambique reported that young people do not attend school regularly because of school-related costs other than fees, in particular food and transport. (Perezniето et al. 2011: 42)

Another factor affecting a household's poverty status, a child's ability to attend school or an adult's ability to be economically active identified in the RCA work is the impact on the family of having a disabled family member. The family described here was considered by the community to be in the category that they identified through a wealth ranking exercise as 'extremely poor'. The mother is entirely reliant on others for survival because her caring responsibilities limit her economic activity.

'Maciquine' lives alone with a heavily handicapped boy of around eight years of age. Their one-room dwelling is nearly falling apart, and the grass roof has large holes in it. She has a total of five children, with the other four being married and living elsewhere in Meluluca. Her fortunes changed in 2009, when her husband died and she lost her main source of support. The dwelling where she used to live was taken over by her oldest son and his family, and she moved closer to her oldest brother's oldest son – who she realised was the only one who could help her as her own children 'are all poor'. While Maciquine has access to a *machamba*, [agricultural plot of land], she does not really produce as she cannot leave her son alone. Her main source of income is a few chickens, and she makes mats (*esteiras*) when she can get hold of the material. When Maciquine has real difficulties she turns to her nephew (*sobrinho*) for help. Her neighbours, she says, can only afford to give 'moral support'. (*Reality Check* Mozambique 2011: 28).

Transactional sex is a recurring issue in the studies we analysed. *The Youth Vulnerabilities and Adaptation* research describes how young women are forced into transactional sex in order to get or keep jobs. Some women engage in prostitution as a secure form of income. One of the most commonly reported difficulties for female workers in Ghana and Mozambique was sexual harassment by employers. Given limited work opportunities, some female respondents said that there was little they could do about it if they wanted to keep the job:

...Yes, because some of the bosses would like to sleep with you before they hire you. If, for instance, you cannot go to work, they will request sex before they accept your request to be absent. That is what they have been doing. (Young female, in-depth interview, Maamobi, Ghana, Perezniето et al. 2011: 36)

Fear of gangs can also lead to people making choices that further entrench their poverty and marginalisation, for example where families fear their children going out to work:

My son is sixteen years old and could be working but I'm afraid to let him go out. The stress is constant for fear that something will happen to our children, fear that they will be recruited into gangs, because once they are in a gang, it's too late. They can't leave even if they want to. As a mother, you're caught between duty and poverty, because we need our children to help in some way, but sometimes it is better to live with constraints than to wonder if they're coming back or not. Stress is constant because of the constant danger we live with. (Maria Teresa Gonzales, Guatemalan activist, ATD Fourth World 2012: 36)

Box 1 Difficult trade-offs and impossible choices

People living in extreme poverty frequently find themselves facing impossible choices to try to meet their needs. Most often this involves household distribution of resources, usually choosing between buying food or paying school fees for the children. In all our studies, parents and caregivers chose food over education, meeting immediate short-term needs but unable to invest in longer-term strategies. Sending children either to school or work, depending on how much cash is available, is a common difficulty faced by people in poverty. 'In Morahang [Nepal], the teachers we spoke with complained that students were often late for school (as much as two hours late) because they have to help with the farm as so many of their fathers and uncles are abroad' (DFID 2012). Digital stories from women in India and Bangladesh (Lewin 2010), and participatory videos made by women in Uganda (Lovell 2010; Waite and Conn 2011) indicate that limited resources compound gender inequality as households prioritise the education of boys over girls.

Adolescent girls face a particularly stark trade-off, with some offering transactional sexual acts to gain access to schooling or income. 'In addition to the charges students must pay, the cost of transport has been increasing in recent years. Some girls engage in sexual relationships with *chapa* drivers to ensure their transportation, or other benefits, to enable them to attend school.' (ODI and FDC 2011: 9). Respondents in Ghana and Mozambique said that women gain income through sex work, sex in exchange for employment or relationships with sugar daddies, which were not preferred activities but seen as the only way to make money. 'Many girls are now engaged in prostitution, with the full knowledge of their parents, who remain silent because the money they bring home helps the household' (mixed focus group, Hulene, Mozambique, Perezniето et al. 2011: 37). This is also true in Jamaica: 'They have school books to buy and the mother cannot afford it and sometimes they have no father so they turn to the man who can give them. Sometimes, the mother encourage them to go to the men for help' (Moncrieffe 2008: 20).

Other trade-offs include deciding whether to repay micro-credit loans or eat; adolescent mothers needing to provide for their children rather than complete their education; parents putting their children in orphanages because this is perceived as providing a better life; and deciding whether to plant short-term food crops or long-term cash crops. These 'choices' are not choices people should have to make, but are symptomatic of the situations poor people face; where one basic need is only accessible through the sacrifice of other needs and rights. Other trade-offs include deciding whether to repay micro-credit loans or eat; adolescent mothers needing to provide for their children rather than complete their education; parents putting their children in orphanages because this is perceived as providing a better life; and deciding whether to plant short-term food crops or long-term cash crops. These 'choices' are not choices people should have to make, but are symptomatic of the situations poor people face; where one basic need is only accessible through the sacrifice of other needs and rights.

One of the strongest implications of these messages is that **priority needs to be given to addressing the barriers the poorest face in getting access to basic needs such as food, sanitation and land-rights** as without these the poorest cannot access services such as education.

1.4 Prevailing social norms that discriminate

In many settings, women are excluded from programmes and services because of patriarchal traditional systems of managing and distributing resources. Participatory research conducted in India after the tsunami found that:

Even in the case of relief, handled largely through community *panchayats*, single women were the last to be provided the relief. In the case of widows, they were treated as part of their son's families, despite living separately. Even the compensation for the death of a husband was not provided to the widow but provided to the son, in most cases. Common toilets have been constructed close to the settlements, with little concern for privacy and security of women. (Praxis nd-a 19).

In Bihar for example, while formal systems support women's rights to property, informal and traditional

structures have not acknowledged this, and women still do not inherit land (Ekta Parishad and Praxis 2010: 32). Disabled people are similarly excluded from services and employment opportunities because of prevailing societal attitudes. Respondents in a Canadian study suggested

that 'the elimination of discriminatory attitudes and practices within the general population, and within government (including policies that promote equality), would help [disabled] people to overcome poverty' (Buettingen 2010: 107). In Indonesia, despite universal provision to all children existing in theory, there are physical difficulties for disabled children in accessing schooling as well as attitudinal barriers:

Access for children with disabilities is rare. Some schools were not accessible for children with mobility difficulties as footpaths were rocky or hazardous. Parents of children with profound hearing disability told us that they do not send their children to school as there is no special

«Priority needs to be given to addressing the barriers the poorest face in getting access to basic needs such as food, sanitation and land-rights as without these the poorest cannot access services such as education»

Box 2 Social norms create barriers to access

Women and girls particularly experience a set of cultural barriers which prevent them from accessing available services. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa most girls are not taught to swim, although boys are, meaning that when the rivers are flooded, girls are not able to get to school: 'During the rainy season when the river is full, only those who can swim come to school ... female children usually absent themselves ... because most of them cannot swim.' (Father, Northern Ghana, Porter *et al.* 2011: 69). The amount of domestic work girls do before school also means they are more tired than boys and less able to perform well (Porter *et al.* 2011: 69). In South Africa, even when education is available, young girls are extremely vulnerable to violence and abuse in schools. Not only does this have direct implications for girls' education levels, as they may choose not to go to school, but also places girls at risk of contracting HIV (De Lange and Geldenhuys 2012). After the 2004 tsunami, the *panchayats* in coastal villages in India distributed relief last to single women, and failed to pay enough attention to their specific needs (Praxis nd-a: 19). Women's status consistently excludes them from being able to access existing services, and this must be considered by development planners.

Marginalisation is compounded by socioeconomic dynamics within and across groups like gang violence and stigma. One girl in Jamaica said that she could not go to take up computer classes offered in her neighbourhood because of the potential of gang violence: 'Yes, but up weh di computer classes deh, wi can come up deh [We cannot go where the computer classes are] (as they are in rivalry with dons in the area).' (Moncrieffe 2008: 35). This describes how even when opportunities are available, there are social barriers to accessing services. In Ghana, the National Health Insurance Scheme, a safety net aimed at alleviating poverty, has further stigmatised those carrying the NHIS card, to the extent that some people stop using it: 'I have decided not to use my NHIS card anymore because of severe neglect from so many health personnel.' (Young female, Focus Group Discussion, Osu; Perezneito *et al.* 2011: 15). These quotations show that providing a service and access to a service is not enough; social dynamics and inter-personal issues must also be taken into account for poor people to benefit from those services.

provision for them. Some teachers seemed confused during conversations about disabilities and indicated that they had never thought that children with disabilities could be included in school. (AusAID 2010: 29)

These situations point to the importance of working with prevailing social norms to change attitudes towards marginalised groups, in the wider community, and in the practices of traditional governance structures (see Section 4.3).

Where social norms are oppressive and exclusionary for certain groups, a factor that constrains the most marginalised from accessing services can be a sense of fatalism or hopelessness. Ami describes life in Monrovia:

I have no place to call home. I have to wait every night for the market to be empty so I can find a place to sleep. I eat from leftovers in restaurants and market stalls. Before the war, I had a home and there was food to eat no matter how little. Now I have nothing except my death to wait for. (Drew and Ramsbotham, Accord 23 2012: pagenum)

The situation of the Paniya Scheduled Tribe in India is of extreme exclusion: 'Finally, the Paniyas also demonstrate high levels of resignation to their situation and have been found to underreport their health conditions, which is an indication of their extreme levels of deprivation and marginalisation' (Mohindra *et al.* 2010: 3).

ATD Fourth World activists describe their experience of extreme poverty in these terms:

People disrespect us by calling us names like 'social case', 'bad mother', 'incapable', 'good-for-nothing' demonstrates how they are judging us and do not know about the reality we face. We experience the violence of being discriminated against, of not existing, not being part of the same world, not being treated like other human beings. This everyday violence is abuse... (ATD Fourth World 2012: 39)

There is strong evidence that participatory methodologies such as *Reflect*, *Participatory Video*, and *Community-Led Total Sanitation* (CLTS) strengthen capacity in individuals and groups to challenge and transform exclusionary practices in a range of cultural settings (see Section 2.1). Participatory methodologies offer an alternative approach to addressing poverty and exclusion. A resident of Baluch Khel, Afghanistan describes her experience with CLTS:

Before CLTS, it was really difficult for us (women), as there were no latrines in the homes, and we were forced to ease ourselves only early in the morning and late in the evening – it was extremely inconvenient. The men in our village used to walk far away for defecation, while the children used to defecate wherever they wanted in the village – there was shit everywhere! From the village mapping exercise, we realised that we had been defecating even in the middle of our village. As a result of the CLTS campaign, we had

a chance to understand the sanitation situation in our village and to analyse the outcome of open defecation and its effects on our entire life. We found it very shameful, disgusting and unhealthy for us, and realised that shit was everywhere in the village. Since the CLTS campaign, much effort has been made to improve the situation in our village. But now latrine construction is flourishing, and a lot more residents are committing to build latrines. We women have been able to find a lot of privacy, which was not the case before. Now I will work on improving the condition of the latrine to avoid flies and smell. Our village looks clean, with fewer flies, and less sickness too. So far we have shared our CLTS knowledge with our relatives living in another village, so that they too may benefit from this campaign. (Greaves 2010: 9)

coffee plantations to be community activists (*promotores*):

While work with children and young people is the heart of CESESMA's work, its success depends on the adoption of an integrated or 'whole community' approach. Therefore CESESMA works in parallel to build alliances with parents, teachers, community leaders and local officials. (Shier 2010: 223)

The participatory methods which underpin the studies that make up this synthesis are powerful methods for surfacing the complexities, trade-offs and coping strategies of everyday lives. They can enable people to identify effective routes out of poverty for themselves, their families, and communities, and ensure that any support provided from outside can better meet needs and aspirations. The ways in which participatory processes can enable effective development are discussed in the next chapter.

1.5 An holistic approach

All of the issues highlighted above suggest the need to think about the order in which development issues are sequenced, as well as what needs to be provided, when people face multiple barriers. Sustainable change is systemic. It needs to work on multiple levels and to work iteratively, with individual and cultural norms and beliefs, formal and informal processes. This calls for an holistic approach to development across local institutions, families and communities.

An example of such an approach is CESESMA, a youth-led programme in Nicaragua for developing the skills of children and young people who work in

Key conclusions

- Greater resources need to be put into ensuring that the most excluded can access services. This includes isolated minority and indigenous communities, women without access to transport and people with disabilities.
- Priority should be given to ensuring basic needs relating to food, sanitation and land rights as without these the poorest cannot access services such as education.
- Development interventions need to be underpinned by a systemic understanding of people's everyday lives and the trade-offs that they have to make. Often relatively small factors such as the costs of a school uniform are what inhibit access.
- Development interventions need to focus more on challenging social norms which perpetuate exclusion, and behaviours (such as open defecation) which undermine community wellbeing.
- A holistic approach to development engages with people's realities and builds on local capacities, networks and assets. Such an approach makes it possible to engage with the trade-offs, stigma and dependencies that characterise the everyday lives of people living in extreme poverty.

Participation leads to:

- ◆ BETTER FORMULATED POLICIES
- ◆ BETTER IMPLEMENTED POLICIES
- ◆ GREATER RECOGNITION OF CITIZENS' ROLES



2 Development that is sustainable requires meaningful participation that leads to strong local ownership

Sustainable change happens when people living in poverty acquire the tools and knowledge to participate actively and effectively in development processes. This may mean contributing their specific local knowledge, their understanding of the opportunities and challenges that local customs and beliefs present for social change, or it may mean challenging social and institutional injustice and demanding greater state accountability and access to public services. Once people have gained the confidence and skills to participate in these ways, they shift how power is distributed between individuals, communities and institutions, and they will continue to participate. **70 per cent of the studies highlighted that how people experience interventions in their lives is as important to them as what the intervention can offer them.** The sections that follow highlight the key things that people felt were important.

2.1 Local knowledge

In the first phase of this research, which focused on how people living in poverty and marginalisation experience international development interventions ('aid'), a key message was that *development interventions often fail* because they are not tailored to suit local circumstances. According to a spiritual leader in Thailand: 'People come from the outside and do not spend time to get to know the community and the area. They see what is on the surface and they only see problems.' (Anderson *et al.* 2012: 31). Community members in Myanmar, Burma criticise how some NGOs work: 'There are times that NGOs do not provide what people really need. For some NGOs, the projects come from above, top-down. They should listen to the people from the communities.' (Anderson *et al.* 2012: 31). Other studies point to priority given to technical solutions that don't meet needs:

The transport context is highly challenging in terms of even introducing the concept of

children's needs, and far more so regarding children conducting their own research. [Transport engineers] still tend to focus principally on road construction per se, rather than on transport services and user needs. (Porter and Abane 2008: 160)

There were many references in the studies to how top-down aid generates dependencies. A villager in Sri Lanka explains how food rations do not support economic transformation in their community:

This food assistance ought to stop. This money should be given to infrastructure development. 75 per cent of families in this village receive rations for food each month but are unable to pull themselves out of poverty. Changes will be there definitely if families take their economic development into their hands. (Anderson *et al.* 2012: 18)

There are also many stories of how aid creates conflict between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, and how projects don't match what poor people actually want. There is a sense in which people want aid that is slower and more thoughtful:

Many countries where aid is given have experienced wide scale violence, sometimes over extended periods of time... in all but one country [where the Listening Project had visited] people said that international aid over time had introduced or reinforced tensions among groups and that cumulatively it had increased the potential for violence and/or fundamental divisions within their societies. (Anderson *et al.* 2012: 20)

Reconstruction efforts after the tsunami in India were found to be most effective when local knowledge, dynamics and aspirations were valued. Large numbers of NGOs and aid organisations arrived in the immediate aftermath, not always able to be effective due to their lack of knowledge of the region:

Those few NGOs that have been there for years... have a clear mission and an intricate understanding of local social, economic and political dynamics. Considering these NGOs' in-depth knowledge and prior presence in the affected villages, their approach towards post-tsunami relief and rehabilitation has been distinctly different. Their plans are uniquely informed by the previous status of the community, while also bearing in mind the aspirations that the communities hold for the future. (Praxis nd-a: 75)

2.2 Local ownership

Valuing local knowledge is closely linked to creating local ownership of development processes, which research shows is central to sustainability.

In Timor Leste, traditional and cultural responses to conflict management are perceived as more effective because there is **local ownership over the process** and that this will make the resolution more sustainable:

Mostly the people here want to be fully involved in the process of solving it [conflict] based on traditions that they have, that apply to their community, so they can feel that their culture is applied to solve their problems. By applying their culture they feel that the problem that they [have] solved, the duration is for long term, it's like an everlasting problem solving. And it is not to satisfy certain leaders at the national level, but it is to fulfil their culture, to fulfil their own desire that they have in their community and also they feel that they are respected, and they are the owner of the process.

(National civil society representative, Saferworld 2012b: 29)

Reality Check research in Bangladesh and Indonesia found that clinics and schools were not functioning well. Staff arriving late, clinics open in the wrong places, teachers providing their students answers in exams in order to meet national government targets. A participant in this research suggests a solution:

The government should involve local people from the beginning – in selecting the right place, monitoring construction quality, making committee members accountable to the community for proper functioning of the clinic. (Reality Check Bangladesh, 2011: 24)

Local involvement and training in maintaining community infrastructure is also important. For example in Bangladesh, every year drains get broken and blocked and during the rainy season the floods bring sewage into people's houses. The state provides the drains, but without community involvement and ownership, they are not maintained in good condition:

I was walking through water which was almost to my knee. The paths were covered in sewage. My HHH [host household] and neighbours' houses were under water. Gas stoves were under

water, so they couldn't cook for the family. They told me that in the rainy season often they face this sort of trouble. Three years ago new drains were constructed but these are breaking and getting filled up with waste. My HHH mother told me that 'we don't know how to maintain our streets and drains.' She complained that there is no follow through by the Municipality after installing drains.

(Field Notes, Central urban, SIDA 2012a: 18)

The Chairman of a social welfare group in Western Kenya noted how assistance from the outside can't get to everyone in need. Instead, what is called for is greater local capacity:

Most often, what is provided is so little compared to the population deserving it. Since it is not possible to provide assistance or aid enough for the people who need it, agencies should focus more on strategies or initiatives that enable people to do more for themselves so that as the agencies exit the locals can still go on without having to look to another agency from outside again.

(Collaborative Learning Projects 2007: 16)

The approach of Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) builds local ownership and strengthens local capacities and skills to manage and maintain important household and community assets. One of the core features of CLTS is that it relies on local materials and products for the construction of latrines. This way, communities are not depending on external donors in the situation that they need to replace parts, and the project itself has the chance to be sustainable in the long run. Katharine, a village health team member in Katipe, Uganda explains how this participatory approach enables children to find their own solutions to sanitation issues:

Children were bored with the messages about good hygiene and sanitation, but when I started using the CLTS Approach, I noticed a positive change. I wasn't preaching to the children what they were supposed to do, but engaged the children and asked them to draw a map of where they were defecating when they were at school and asked them to collect some of this shit and showed them how this shit attracted the flies that were also sitting on their faces and on their food!! Children soon got the message and decided that they didn't want to eat shit any more, not when they were at school or at home. Instead of telling them how to solve this problem, I asked the children to come up with solutions by themselves and make an action plan how to improve the situation... Within a short time the toilets at the school were cleaned up and the children stopped defecating in the open when they were at school.

(PLAN 2012: 30)

Participatory approaches such as CLTS can reverse traditional assumptions that the poor need external help. Mahmud, a farmer from Tilorma, Sierra Leone



CAROLINE PENNIPANS

explains: 'We found it very difficult in the beginning to accept that we ourselves should build our own toilets with our own local materials' (UNICEF 2008: 2). Through taking on responsibility for maintaining latrines, drains or other community assets, this dependency begins to be eroded along with the shame and humiliation of living in insanitary conditions and – as the CLTS research testifies – people report increased feelings of dignity and self-worth. This is an example of the 'meaningful participation' discussed in the next section.

2.3 Meaningful participation

Processes that draw on and promote local knowledge and ownership are participatory in a meaningful way. The extensive participation of people living in poverty in the studies included in this research has enabled insight into the drivers of poverty and a deeper understanding of people's experiences of poverty and the systemic blockages that keep many people in extreme poverty. In China, participatory poverty mapping and monitoring [Village Poverty Reduction Planning] presents an opportunity to significantly improve poverty targeting by addressing symptoms of poverty that are directly relevant to the reasons why village poverty persists, especially in the poorest households' (Xiaoyun and Remenyi 2008: 600).

As well as its functional benefits in terms of information gathering, participatory research is a tool that promotes the values that must underpin the post-2015 framework. Through participating in research about their own lives and through pooling

their knowledge and experience with others, people who live in poverty find dignity, recognition of their abilities, and the confidence to tackle problems themselves.

In the Solomon Islands, participatory research brought greater confidence and cohesion to the community: 'The programme increased confidence in (our) own knowledge. We are realising that we can organise and deal with problems ourselves. With the programme, it sparked off a traditional inherited ability (to do this)' (Kahua Association Council Member, Fazey et al. 2010). In Nigeria: 'On the community side, the CBOs started to use their action plans as a basis for negotiating political power and participation in governance. In the campaigns leading to the April 2003 elections, communities such as Sab-Zuro and Anchau in Kaduna State began to ask political aspirants to enter into a contract with the community that they would address the issues in their community action plan as a condition for voting them into office' (Abah and Okwori 2005: 18). And in the UK:

When residents in these areas discovered that the Health Authority (HA) was planning to close their local health centre, they decided to take action. The HA claimed that the centre was not sufficiently used, so residents decided to undertake research to examine this claim. They worked with

Village water-pump and sanitation caretakers, India.

«Processes that draw on and promote local knowledge and ownership are participatory in a meaningful way»

a freelance researcher who trained them to carry out interviews and coordinated the research. One of the women who took part spoke of the enjoyment they experienced at being involved: *'It was brilliant doing the research, I really did enjoy it. It was a laugh a minute. Doing it on ourselves, teaching one another how to do it, role playing.'* The positive feelings were enhanced by the success of the campaign: the HA agreed to keep the health centre open and a new general practitioner was recruited to work there. Residents decided to continue working to improve health services in the area. (Barnes 2007: 8)

Research in Mexico explains how participatory research has brought about significant changes for poor indigenous women – amongst the most marginalised groups in Mexican society. Through coming together to discuss their experiences of poverty and discrimination, people who are marginalised begin to reframe how they understand their situation:

Pension Parishad protest, India



DIGVIJAY SINGH

Even the poorest indigenous women from Chiapas have been able to speak out and present their demands, and have, to some extent, influenced policy. They are constructing their own vision of development based on their own rights. This can be interpreted as a process of citizenship construction. Through their participation, indigenous women are promoting change and guaranteeing their social, political and cultural rights. Their struggles are grounded in their conviction of their 'right to have rights'. Indigenous women can be seen as political actors, creating their own history in a particular territory and in a multicultural nation. Individual and collective empowerment is the outcome of their participation and actions in different spaces. (Cortez Ruiz 2005: 144)

According to ATD Fourth World (2012), it is through the very process of talking about poverty from their own experience that people begin to challenge how society stigmatises them, and how they can build on their strengths:

The authorities and the partners who are combating poverty publish statistics. They announce them over the radio or in the press. But these organizations didn't seek out the poorest to hear what they had to say... How do we allow these families to talk about their courage, their hopes, about how they fight night and day to get out of poverty without always saying what is wrong? That is a lack of knowledge. It is important to let these families speak for themselves about how they live. (Actors' Group, Central African Republic, ATD Fourth World 2012: 58)

Within spaces or mechanisms for participation and expression – created by civil society or public administrations – it is necessary to create conditions in which people living in poverty can freely express themselves, building on factors that strengthen and mobilize them, rather than what humiliates or shames them. It is the strength they gain that empowers them with a sense of agency to speak out, act in solidarity with one another, avoid humiliating each other, and ultimately feel in a position of equality from which they can freely enter into dialogue with society and its institutions. We know where, with whom and when we can talk. (Raquel Juarez, Activist, Guatemala, ATD Fourth World 2012: 60)

2.4 Strengthening formal and informal networks

Approaches that bring people together to learn (for example, the Reflect approach to literacy) provide a space in which individual and collective reflection can take place, through sharing and discussion of experiences. Out of this process, collective action may arise. A number of *Reflect* evaluations provide

Box 3 Strengthening capacity

The participatory processes analysed showed strengthened individual and collective capacity, with participants expressing improved confidence, skills and vision after the research or programme intervention.

A primary school teacher from Salima, Malawi, describes gender-based empowerment experienced through the *Stepping Stones* approach: 'The project enabled me to understand myself and my relationship with my husband better. This understanding enabled me to become more open to discuss subjects including sex which I wouldn't have dared mention before. My husband became more open too and now we don't keep secrets from each other' (DFID 2007: 1).

A person with disabilities in the UK described her experience with participatory research: 'It has nothing to do with being disabled; it has to do with having the confidence in yourself! In your heart and your soul 'cause you know that you feel it and you know that you are able to do it. And we are able. We are people who are able to make a difference in society' (Buettgen *et al.* 2012: 612).

At the community level, respondents reported greater community engagement and understanding of change processes, and empowerment to tackle problems themselves. Patience, aged 18: 'We have taught others at school how to do role play ... We want to extend the research to different places so we can then address problems' (Porter and Abane 2008: 160).

In a community mediation programme in Nepal, participants went through a learning process that helped develop their own local understandings of conflict and its resolution: 'We learned that we could develop ideas about how things work from our own experience. We started to create our own theories and ideas and frameworks. We knew that understanding was there, but we had never thought to make use of it' (Lederach and Thapa 2012: 16).

The research process carried out by the *People's PeaceMaking Perspectives Project* highlighted the change that is generated through a participatory process: 'People said that much more workshops are needed, they're a space for us to discuss things – and maybe that's more important than our survey' (Local partner, Conciliation Resources and Saferworld 2012: 17). These last quotations show that enhancing capacities through participatory processes can contribute significantly to developing local ownership of development interventions.

examples of this process. In Bangladesh, a group of women who were mainly working as day labourers, came together in a *Reflect Circle*. They would get work usually only six months in the year when landowners required labour for the paddy fields, and were paid at half the rate of men labourers, even though they were doing the same work. Mostly, women took this as their 'fate'. The *Reflect Circle* trainer reports:

But Momena and the participants of Kamatpara Sada Circle did not take it easy. They started finding out the answers of why they were paid less than the males if even they worked equal or more. They then started discussing on discrimination in waging. They took it as their movement. They collectively declared that they would not have worked if they were paid less – they then demanded for 70 taka. On 10 December 2009, a landowner came to Momena to take her to his work. Momena gave him her answer clearly. He went back avoiding Momena and looked for other labourers. But he got stunned to see all women labourers' position against unequal wages. The landowners sought for labourers from other areas but failed. After 3 days they had been bound to fix new rate of wages. After that Momena and other women labourers started getting 70 taka (approximately 1 US Dollar) wages every day. (Tarek Masud Nobin, Reflect Trainer, Translation: Reflect Development Unit, ActionAid 2009: 4)

Participatory methodologies such as the *Reflect Circles* address the complex interaction of poverty, discrimination and stigmatisation through a combination of literacy, numeracy and personal and community development activities. Such approaches build the confidence of individuals and in particular, women, to break with the social norms that disempower them and take charge of their economic and social development. Through the Circles, they also build community capacity by developing and strengthening local networks. These networks are critical for improving survival strategies, both by increasing skills, knowledge and contacts for economic activity, and by engaging with 'the system' – with the formal and informal institutions through which support, protection and resources can be secured. 'For many of the poor, the main coping strategy is to establish or maintain relations with others who they believe are in a position to support them both in their daily lives and in times of particular needs' (*Reality Check Mozambique* 2011: 38). The *Participatory Poverty and Vulnerability Assessment* (PPVA) in Ghana found that informal networks are being drained by poverty, and argues that investing in and supporting informal networks could strengthen development, provide projects with a solid foundation, and bring more chance of sustainability in the long run (Korboe 2011). In Nepal, networks were described as making the difference for securing well-paid jobs abroad: 'Households told us they exploit different networks to arrange jobs and it was clear that some villages were better connected than others.' (DFID 2012: 25).

A group of women amputees exercising together at a rehabilitation centre, Haiti.

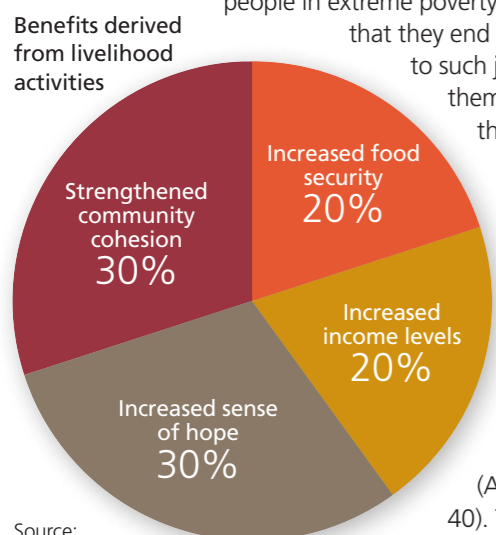


WILLIAM DANIELSPANOS

2.5 Empowerment and wellbeing

The research shows that a lack of wellbeing (often characterised by poor mental health, a lack of dignity and no hope), is as important to address as material poverty. That wellbeing is also about feeling dignity and hope comes through very clearly in the voices in a wide range of contexts – including Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) work (Plan 2010–2011), and peoples’ experiences and interactions with international assistance (Anderson *et al.* 2012). Reflect programme evaluators in Malawi found that hope and community cohesion (Reflect Malawi, MOWCD and UNDP 2007: pagnum) were key dimensions of wellbeing.

Participatory research reveals that public policies often stigmatise rather than empower people living in poverty. ‘The indifference and contempt to which people in extreme poverty are subjected is so violent that they end up submitting themselves to such judgments, doubting themselves and seeing themselves only through the eyes of others: useless, incapable and reduced to “waste.” These humiliations result in suffering, indignation, anger, feelings of injustice and neglect, and distrust of other people and institutions, and silence their victims’ (ATD Fourth World 2012: 40). The stigma of poverty is also a barrier to participation that needs to be overcome.



Source: Malawi Reflect 2007 report: 42

And if you’re going to have discussions about things, groups that want to do roundtables and surveys and stuff, they need to provide transportation for the people attending. And they need to look at the things that people need to be able to attend. A lot of people don’t come to things because they don’t think that they’re dressed well enough. Other people don’t come to things because they don’t have the bus ticket to go. Other people don’t come because they feel like they can’t speak well enough, they’re not educated enough or that they don’t understand the jargon that is being used. And if you can’t keep up with that, how are you gonna understand what’s goin’ on? (Disability group participant, Canada, Buettgen 2010: 93)

The participatory evaluations of *Reflect Circles* point to gains in confidence, but also positive socioeconomic impacts such as the setting up of small businesses and micro-credit schemes, the empowerment of women and improved health among *Reflect Circle* members (with numerous examples cited from South Africa, Cambodia, Sierra Leone and Malawi):

Not being able to read and write meant that I could not fully participate in and contribute to various developmental efforts taking place in my community... I am very much delighted with the project because it allows us to deal with issues of illiteracy and poverty together. I now have confidence to say what I want in public, and I am able to stand up and contribute during community development meetings in my area. (42-year-old woman from Jailosi village, Malawi, MOWCD & UNDP 2007: 39)

People spoke about the anxiety and stress produced by the trade-offs and choices that we discussed above.

People are more aware of what they are missing and this can cause anxiety about being left behind. Making unimaginable choices impacts strongly on people’s wellbeing – both materially and psychologically. These are choices people should not have to make.

They also associated higher stress levels, and thus lower levels of wellbeing, with accelerated rates of change and uncertainty. A growing awareness of inequality has resulted from rapid advances in and increased access to communications technology. People are more aware of what they are missing and this can cause anxiety about being left behind.

There are also inequalities in access to consumer culture, with many people exposed to increased pressure to consume (often coming from their children) which they cannot afford. Voices from the *Reality Check* research in Indonesia describe this:

One said: ‘You have met my daughter, she seems very quiet and nice doesn’t she? But you should see her if I say I have no money for pocket money. She screams and screams and I have to give in to her’ (Household Host father, East 2). Another said: *‘Ira’s parents work outside (the country) so Ira will go round all her relatives asking for pocket money every day.’* (Ira’s grandfather, East 1). A third: *‘The neighbours’ children throw a tantrum and refuse to go to school (West 2) if the parents do not give them pocket money’.* (*Reality Check* Indonesia, AusAID 2010: 26)

Culture change may also increase anxieties for parenting, with people recognising that the globalisation of ICT creates new pressures and demands on poor families. The introduction of TV into poor communities has an impact on family and neighbourhood dynamics:

Provision of domestic electricity is both a hindering and enabling factor for education. Where there is electricity, there are TVs. In some villages there may only be four or five TVs but nightly neighbours pour into these houses to watch TV. Sometimes people are expected to pay to watch TV (Rp 500 per evening). In some villages these sessions are tightly controlled and the TV is switched off at around 9 pm ‘so that the children can go to bed’ (Central 2) but in others, children stay watching TV until late at night, sometimes as late as 1 or 2 am. (*Reality Check* Indonesia, AusAID 2010: 38)

Consumption is important as a means of negotiating with teenagers. Interviewed parents considered ‘buying their children what they want’ as a reward for good behaviour and an alternative solution for violence (CESESMA 2012: 11), but this often means that they are even less able to afford what they need to survive.

There are of course multiple factors that impact on wellbeing. What is important is that those engaged in development are aware of them, and understand their importance.

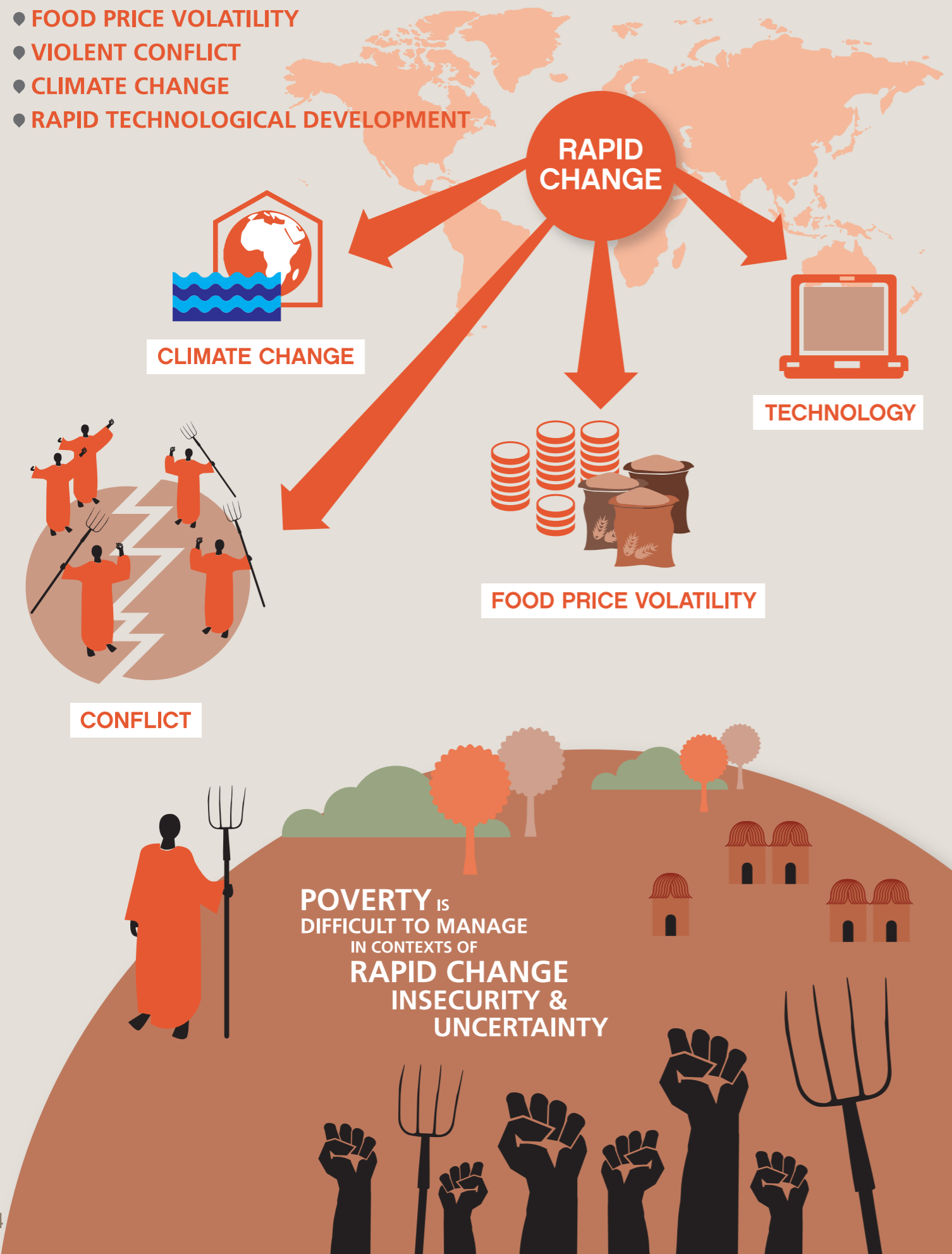
Key conclusions

- Interventions that are not based on a deep understanding of local dynamics are at best perceived as inappropriate, and at worst generate conflict and deepen the marginalisation of some groups.
- Sustainable development processes build local ownership, and bring local assets such as knowledge, culture and networks to the development process.
- Participatory processes need to be built into every stage of the development process: from inception; to design; from implementation to learning, monitoring and evaluation. This should be seen as a core part of the post-2015 international agreement.
- Formal and informal networks are key to survival strategies and to empowerment, and should be prioritised as a focus of development.
- A lack of wellbeing (often characterised by poor mental health, a lack of dignity and no hope), is as important to address as material poverty. Participatory processes that empower people; that challenge stigma, and ensure that development enhances dignity and hope are crucial.

These conclusions emphasise the importance of incorporating participation into the new development framework – it can be understood as the glue that holds together the necessary elements for a holistic and sustainable approach to development that addresses inequalities. Development must work holistically, with multiple actors but with the poor at the centre. The challenge is to build coherence across interventions. This requires a thorough understanding of the complexity and uncertainty of people’s lives, and a sophisticated approach to supporting people in these scenarios. But also a deep understanding of people’s aspirations and concerns coupled with the recognition that they have rights as citizens – the right not to be left out of the development process for generation after generation, but to play an active part – be they women, children, children, or people living with HIV/AIDS. Participation both builds capacities in itself, and also makes governance and development processes more accountable.

Recognition of rapid change:

- ◆ FOOD PRICE VOLATILITY
- ◆ VIOLENT CONFLICT
- ◆ CLIMATE CHANGE
- ◆ RAPID TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT



3 Poverty is increasingly characterised by uncertainty, crisis, conflict, insecurity and volatility

The effects of global, macro-level events feature strongly in the voices of the poorest and most marginalised people participating in the studies from the last seven years. This has been a period of profound change, with the continuing global economic crisis including food price volatility as well as the effects of ongoing issues such as climate change and, for many, the impacts of living in conflict or post-conflict settings. A sense of uncertainty and insecurity plays out at the individual, household and community levels, in the ways people make decisions and express their needs and wants, especially in relation to addressing their poverty and vulnerability. This sense of uncertainty generates tensions within households and communities.

For example, the *Youth Vulnerabilities and Adaptation* research shows that the lack of employment or poor employment resulting from the post-3F crisis (food, fuel and financial interrelated crises) have caused significant stress among young people, their households and communities, contributing to a sense of frustration and distress. In Mozambique:

Young people in all research sites in Mozambique said that social tension arising from lack of employment had become more perceptible in recent years as opportunities continued to diminish. Similarly in Ghana, the reduction in the money available to young people and their households reportedly triggered anxiety, with youth worried about what might happen the next day. (Perezniето et al. 2011: 46)

This is echoed elsewhere, with people feeling 'squeezed' as wages fluctuate, prices rise, and even where wages seem to be increasing, this is not as fast as inflation, as these voices from Nairobi demonstrate:

Sometimes in the kazi kwa vijana [youth project] you do not know how much you will be paid. Sometimes you get paid KSh3,000 (\$35.71) at the end of the month, and at other times, the

payment rises to KSh5,000 (\$59.52), though in the contract we signed for pay of KSh5,500 (\$65.48). (Female focus group participant, Mukuru, Nairobi, Hossain and Green 2011: 36)

A woman in Nairobi explained that although her monthly wages had doubled from KSh 2000 in 2007 to KSh 4000 in 2009, her rent had nearly trebled, from KSh 300 to KSh 1000 over the same period, and she was having difficulties feeding her family. In rural Bangladesh, women noted that although the daily agricultural wage rate had risen from around Tk 70-80 two to three years ago to Tk 110 in 2009 'it is still not possible to buy enough food and it is necessary to take loans too when there is no work, to buy food.' (Hossain 2009: 32)

Sudden shocks can thrust people and families into poverty which it is hard to come back from, even if social and economic norms are restored. This poses greater challenges to vulnerable groups such as single mothers:

Life has not been easy ... Life has become expensive and it is difficult to survive, especially with a big family such as mine and the situation is even worse because I look after the family singlehanded. (A former fruit and vegetable vendor Kabwata, Lusaka, Hossain et al. 2010: 42)

Lack of livelihood and employment alternatives drives many people to make choices – such as moving from livelihoods as rural farmers into the city, or to working abroad – which are difficult to reverse and often bring about new forms of discrimination and exclusion and the sense of being excluded from your own country:

How does [unemployment] affect me? I don't want to live in this country. Because of it, I don't

trust this country at all. I don't trust anyone. When you go abroad you see how people live there. And I understand that if we had someone else running our country we might be living better ... All young people who don't have work are suffering. Is it not [an experience of] violence to go abroad and not have the protection of your state? (23-year-old Uzbek, working as a labourer in Russia, Saferworld 2012c: 23)

Migration was identified as a trend across many countries, in the belief that 'migration gives them some freedom and a choice in life.' (Saferworld 2012c: 18). Although migration is seen by most as a positive coping strategy, the studies revealed that migrants experience some of the worst and most impoverished living and working conditions. Internal migration (mainly to cities) is increasing; however, the link between migration and employment is not always clear, as in Vietnam, unemployment was seen as a consequence of migration, with young migrants finding it difficult to obtain jobs. Migration to the cities was also found to lead to poor working conditions, homelessness and no

«The world is now highly dynamic – whereas many development interventions have been designed to work in a static environment (Chambers 2010)»

access to health care or other basic services (Perezniato *et al.* 2011). Deepening poverty also drives the poor into more marginalised areas with fewer resources, services or access to transport: Migrants were most challenged by increasing prices. 'The high prices, compared to the wages they receive, make them [the migrants] the new "poor people"' (Action Aid employee, Vietnam, Roesen 2011). A migrant in Vietnam said, 'At the moment our salaries stay stable but market prices are dramatically increasing. All kinds of services and items, such as house rent, electricity, water and food, have increased. This makes us poorer and directly affects our daily meals' (Action Aid employee, Vietnam, Roesen 2011).

However, while migration brings increased vulnerability for the migrant, the remittances are crucial to households living on the edge of extreme poverty (Korboe 2011; *Reality Check Nepal* DFID 2012). Having a member of the family working overseas can bring economic benefits and also status to poor families for example in rural Nepal: 'I started to eat rice as soon as my son started sending me money from abroad in 2002' (Household Host grandfather, Morahang, *Reality Check Nepal* DFID 2012: 25).

In Yaku village's informal mapping with households indicated that as much as 80% of households currently had members earning abroad, mostly in the Middle East in construction. In Jorpati villages there was much talk of overseas migration and currently about 25% households have workers abroad but more than 50% have

worked abroad at some point recently. In Budhabare nearly every household had a member currently abroad, mostly in Malaysia. The numbers were only less in Num, where cardamom production has taken off and the numbers of overseas-employed persons have dropped dramatically from 7 in 10 households to 1 in 10 in the last ten years. (*Reality Check Nepal*, DFID 2012: 25)

External factors in the form of macro-economic changes and shocks, like the recent global financial crisis, also undermine people's ability to deal with uncertainty, directly affecting coping strategies, both formal and informal safety nets and other responses people employ in order to cope. Coping strategies can involve people making 'impossible choices', (see Box 1). Actions made through necessity with only the short-term in mind compromise and undermine a household's coping capacity in the future. This produces *negative feedback loops*, as short-term strategies deplete resources and reduce longer-term potential. Coping with present contingencies therefore may force poor people to put long-term development second, as illustrated in the Ghana PPVA. Here, perverse coping strategies which the poor are compelled to employ include unregulated bush-burning and inappropriate forms of child labour (Korboe 2011).

Other impossible choices and trade-offs people are forced to make include land use decisions, balancing the need for long-term cash crops against short-term food crops to meet food security needs. The Solomon Islands work on maladaptive trajectories of change ("dynamic processes of individual, group and/or societal responses to change which create further change and responses") describes reinforcing feedback loops in the social-ecological system whereby short-term strategies deplete resources and reduce longer-term systemic potential:

'Declines in food and other resources increase stress in communities. People in Kahua are increasingly turning towards income generation as a way of solving their problems, so increasing stress increases desire to make money and planting of cash crop plantations, which in turn increases the amount of land in use and the pressure on ecological systems, closing the reinforcing feedback loops of decline in provision of ecological services. Increasing number of people increases the amount of land used for food gardens. This not only can increase food production to reduce stress, but also results in an increase in the amount of land in use, reducing land available for cash crops. Because of a finite amount of land that can be cultivated, decisions need to be made about the relative trade-offs in land use where increasing production of cash crops results in less land available for food gardens and vice versa. This is related to the reinforcing feedback loop food versus cash,



FREDERIC COURBET/PANOS

where increasing amount of cash crop plantations can result in reduced space for food gardens, which in turn reduces food availability, increases stress in communities, and reinforces the planting of cash crops' (Fazey *et al.* 2011: 1283)

Many people in the studies are coping with conflict or the consequences of conflict in their communities. As mentioned earlier, anxieties about young people being pulled into gangs and street violence feature large in the lives of many parents. In countries where there is, or has recently been armed conflict, we find that those that were poor and marginalised are worse affected, as they have least possibility of moving away, and are least likely to receive support when resources are made available. In the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) conflict in Uganda, abductees over the age of 18 face bleak prospects on their return home. Unable to return to school, without jobs and no longer living with their parents, they are extremely alienated and

isolated, and to compound matters, people are generally afraid of them (Conciliation Resources 2011: 22). There is a vicious circle here, as the lack of employment prospects for the poor further perpetuates conflict as young people are left with few options. 'Participants spoke of young university graduates who see no job prospects returning to Casamance to join the "maquis" (a guerrilla group of the MFDC). Other recruits may be those whose education has been interrupted by the conflict and so see little economic future' (Conciliation Resources 2012: 17).

Uncertainty related to climate change is also a feature, especially for households involved in farming activities. In Nepal, Sabina speaks about this through participatory video: 'The climate is changing here in Nepal. Excessive rain brings floods and landslides ... The reduced harvests, because of drought and the lack of drinking water are big problems' and Rajit recalls: 'When there was no snow, crop production was very low. My family's crops were not enough for us, we didn't have enough to eat' (Child Voices Video:

Armed 'security guards' in Puntland, Somalia. Men with guns can be hired by anybody who has the money.



G.M.B. ASKASHIPANOS

A woman carries a waterjug in the deep floodwaters in her village. As floodwater becomes stagnant and polluted the existing water supplies become contaminated.

Children of Nepal Speak Out on Climate Change Adaptation). Finally, Martyn, a 15-year-old Mathandani from Malawi also speaks to this: 'The main risk of climate change is hunger. My area has been affected by changes to crop growing cycles' (Children in a Changing Climate 2009: 7).

We are also facing faster rates of change compared to the past – particularly in technology and culture. People are very aware of this, and can add to a sense of being excluded, being left behind:

Global engineers, such as the WTO and the World Bank, are inhibiting the ability of small-scale farmers to develop. Technological development is geared to reducing labour, with crop development designed to simplify management rather than introduce complex integrated cropping. The investment required for GM or large-scale dams and irrigation, for example, far outstrips the costs of low-tech solutions evolved by communities themselves – the former are favoured by those in power. Hetty Selwyn – Farmers' Link, Pimbert *et al.* 2006: 17–18)

For fishermen in India, this is compounded by the

lack of sustainability of modern, unregulated fishing practices making it harder to get a good catch. Here, overfishing of locally favoured species and the chasing away of fish from the shore by increasing numbers of motorised boats and trawlers over the last twenty years, has driven up prices: 'However, with the share of smaller fishermen in the catch of popular species declining alarmingly, the advantages of higher prices were largely reaped by owners of mechanized boats' (Praxis nd-a: 49–50; also Praxis nd-b: 59).

Reality Checks research in Indonesia found that technology is having a distorting effect on the lives of the poor as they prioritise the status that technological goods bring over basic needs:

In fact in many of our villages, asset ownership can appear to contradict normative perceptions of poverty. TVs, mobile phones and motorbikes, whether new or second-hand, are all purchased on credit ... The result is that there are very high levels of household indebtedness across all our study villages, through institutional and informal credit provision. Luxury goods are prioritised by families in our study areas over basic sanitation

provision. Very few of our study households had any form of sanitary latrine, and bathing was generally in the open using a standpipe or the river ... Kitchens either incorporated in the house or in outside sheds were very basic, and all our HHH relied on the use of firewood for cooking (AusAID 2010: 15).

The world is now highly dynamic – whereas many development interventions have been designed to work in a static environment (Chambers 2010).

Mobility is one of the few means for adaption available to the poorest people, whether this takes the form of moving animals to where there is food and water, or people migrating to the city. Many such as those displaced by war or natural disaster have little choice but to move. Yet the whole idea of development is based on 'place'. Citizenship is connected to place and services are provided from fixed places. More attention needs to be paid to the needs of populations that are increasingly mobile.

Box 4 Crisis, uncertainty and volatility

Environmental change was identified by respondents as highly important and a strong source of anxiety, as many poor people depend on agriculture for food and income. Several studies identified climate change as causing insecurity and affecting crop yields. For example, in Nepal, the seasonal cycle is now unpredictable: 'The winter is not regular and other seasons have also changed. The winter was very short this year. It has affected our crops. The snowfall helps crops like wheat, barley, and buckwheat grow well. But due to the lack of snowfall last year, not enough food was produced. Families faced food shortages as their crops were not enough' (Plush 2009: 122).

In Ghana, young people identified the multiple impacts of climate change: 'Inability to pay school-related costs, resulting in school abandonment ... Seasonal migration to the south to find short-term jobs ... reduced food consumption' (Perezniato *et al.* 2011: 57). Several studies suggested that climate change impacts have increased over the last few years, with a variety of effects reported such as droughts or floods, higher temperatures and decreased fish stocks. These shocks mean households are experiencing increased insecurity.

The environmental changes experienced are compounded by the state of the global market. A village doctor in Bangladesh noted how, due to volatility in food prices, people in extreme poverty are unable to cover other basic needs such as education and health: 'Previously, even though people earned less, they managed to buy the food they needed. Nowadays, a daily labourer earns Tk120 (\$1.65) per day. If he buys 2kg of rice, it will cost him Tk80 (\$1.10) and he will have only Tk40 (\$0.55) left. Now, tell me, what can he do with this Tk40? Nothing – no more education, no more medicine' (Hossain and Green 2011: 29).

Volatility not only affects consumers but also producers, since small farmers are unable to compete with the low prices of imported foodstuffs or those produced from large-scale agribusiness (Pimbert *et al.* 2006). In Zambia, the Chikwanda village chief explained that 'the food surplus is being created by commercial farmers who are supported by government. The majority of farmers in my territory are not producing surplus because they cannot afford to buy fertilizer and hybrid seeds' (Hossain and Green 2011: 15–16). The variability in global market prices has a strong effect on even small-scale farmers, and causes them to live with insecurity and unpredictability.

Finally, feelings of economic insecurity and uncertainty are exacerbated by violent environments. In Guatemala, Maria Teresa recalls 'The stress is constant for fear that something will happen to our children, fear that they will be recruited into gangs, because once they are in a gang, it's too late (...) Stress is constant because of the constant danger we live with' (ATD Fourth World 2012: 12).

Key conclusions

- There is a need to develop interventions, technologies, systems of governance which support populations that are moving and or are in transition.
- Economic migration is central to the survival strategies of many families struggling to cope with extreme poverty – formal and informal institutions of governance need to recognise this reality and encourage support networks for families that are divided in this way.
- It is increasingly necessary to address the huge gulf between emergency response measures and sustainable development measures, as day-to-day reality for many of the poorest is characterised by crisis.

Promote better governance

Better governance is based on values of:

- ◆ ACCOUNTABILITY
- ◆ TRANSPARENCY
- ◆ TRUST
- ◆ ACCESS TO INFORMATION
- ◆ RESPONSIVENESS
- ◆ EFFECTIVENESS



What matters most? Poor governance reinforces poverty for the poorest and most marginalised

4 Poor governance reinforces poverty for the poorest and most marginalised

Poor governance is a fundamental barrier to development. This is neither new nor surprising, but what is important to report is how consistently the message comes through in the participatory studies, that people view improved governance as central to positive change in their lives. **44 per cent (37 out of 84) of the studies make direct reference to the relationship between poverty, exclusion and poor governance.**

4.1 National governance

National governance is crucial for protection from the kinds of shocks discussed in Chapter 3. People aspire to a government that can provide support to help them cope with complex and unexpected economic or environmental shocks, instability and conflict (e.g. small farmers in Central America (Pimbert *et al.* 2006: 15–16), and in Zambia (Hossain and Green 2011: 15–16). In conflict situations, people need their institutions to provide them with security, and in extreme poverty with social protection. Formal support mechanisms are important for addressing structural barriers and to stem the transmission of intergenerational poverty. But where governance is weak, these mechanisms are ineffective, mismanaged, and expectations are low.

Further, rather than provide solutions and protection, governments contribute to exclusion and conflict through a lack of transparency, accountability and responsiveness. In many of the People's Peacemaking studies, participants felt that there was a link between conflict in their countries and poor governance. 'All participants mentioned the related issues of ineffective or lack of decentralised governance, corruption and unfair distribution of resources. They felt that poor governance was one of the critical drivers of conflict in both Sierra Leone and Liberia' (Conciliation Resources 2012: 11–12). In the Mano River Union, people also felt that 'poor governance was one of the critical drivers of conflict' and that the disarmament, demobilisation and

reintegration process had done little to change the fact that 'the vast majority of people in rural areas across the MRU still feel excluded from decision-making in their own countries.' (Conciliation Resources 2012: 11).

Young people who feel excluded and lied to by their governments begin to look for alternatives: 'The cases of Tunisia and Egypt demonstrated that people will and can free themselves from the chain of authoritarian regimes as soon as they feel it's the right time. I am fed up with democracy as a political manoeuvre in this country.' (Young community leader in Murghab, Tajikistan, Saferworld 2012c: 23).

Regarding national policy in primary health and education, the message is clear: it is not enough for a service to be available, without guaranteeing its quality and monitoring its performance. People in poverty struggle to send their children to school or to travel to a health centre, and are concerned and deeply frustrated when the quality of service that is provided is inadequate. Research into *Youth Vulnerabilities and Adaptation* in Mozambique, and the *Reality Check* studies in Mozambique, Indonesia and Bangladesh found that, while there has been an increase in provision of primary health and education, 'The quality of education has worsened. Teachers are no longer keen, and they go and teach when they want. Many people complete standard 8 but cannot read and write' (male student, Polana Caniço, ODI and FDC 2011: 10). Sometimes the policy framework is not well adapted to the local reality and this has a negative effect on local practices. In Indonesia for example, pressure on teachers to get children through the public examination has created perverse incentives. The reality of many children's lives is that they will regularly miss school because they have to work and so are unlikely to pass the exam, although

«It is not enough for a service to be available without guaranteeing its quality and monitoring its performance»

is inadequate. Research into *Youth Vulnerabilities and Adaptation* in Mozambique, and the *Reality Check* studies in Mozambique, Indonesia and Bangladesh found that, while there has been an increase in provision of primary health and education, 'The quality of education has worsened. Teachers are no longer keen, and they go and teach when they want. Many people complete standard 8 but cannot read and write' (male student, Polana Caniço, ODI and FDC 2011: 10). Sometimes the policy framework is not well adapted to the local reality and this has a negative effect on local practices. In Indonesia for example, pressure on teachers to get children through the public examination has created perverse incentives. The reality of many children's lives is that they will regularly miss school because they have to work and so are unlikely to pass the exam, although

most are keen to continue with their schooling. However, as a primary school teacher explained, this pressure from national policy is unhelpful:

It is the teachers who take the exams otherwise every student will fail! The teacher whose subject is to be examined that day is not allowed to be in school on that day, but they can falsify the names so that in fact he stays there. The outside invigilator has to cover several classrooms so when he is out of the exam room the subject teacher gives the students all the answers. This is an open secret. Everyone knows this happens the teachers are afraid they will lose their jobs if their students fail, the sub district Education office and the district office both want their area to do well nationally. So everyone knows. (AusAID 2010: 48)

The interventions to address blockages that prevent the poor from accessing and benefiting from the more formal governance structures are fundamentally about improving transparency, accountability and responsiveness, but also about greater coherence and engagement with informal and social institutions and norms. It is at the local level where people generally interact with institutions, and where the tensions and potential synergies between the formal and the informal can be found.

4.2 Local, formal institutions

Inadequate or poorly planned and maintained local services frustrate the efforts of the poorest to build stable lives. In India, there are people living in poor neighbourhoods who cannot cross the road to get to work. During the discussion on a social map it emerged that drainage is one of the biggest problems for the residents of Sudarshan Layout's slum settlement. But the problem results in many further problems that affect the quality of life of the local residents. As the discussion on the map progressed, it emerged that the problem of overflowing drains is especially severe during the monsoon period, between July and August every year, when a big sewer line gets flooded and most of the drainage chambers overflow, flooding the streets of the locality. The stagnant water on the street leads to the problem of mosquitoes, which affects health and quality of sleep. A particular group of local residents who are affected by the stagnant water are very young children.

The implications of drainage ripple out to the resident's perception of the government and negative effects on children's health, as indicated in this quote:

This negligence reflects and associates the drainage problem with a larger issue attached to life in the urban slums of India, that is, **the government's non-recognition and ignorance of the well-being of citizens who dwell in slums.** As an AC3 member who participated in the discussion added, *'There is no important person living here. This is a slum, so the*

government treats like it is'. (Singh 2011: 12)

In Bangladesh, drains also overflow pouring sewage into people's houses. As seen in Chapter 1, people here felt that their governments were not accountable to them, and that the poorest and most marginalised were not entitled to government protection. And candidates make promises at election time, which they do not follow through when they are elected: 'They promised much, but after sitting in the government they do not deliver what was promised to the community. A lot of false promises were deliberately thrown about in the campaigning of political parties, but after getting the seats and leadership they do not realise all the promises' (Local political actor in Timor Leste, Saferworld 2012b: 14).

Lack of transparent and accountable institutions foster the uneven distribution of assistance or aid in different contexts:

If you are not a member of a political party or you do not have any friends or family in the municipal administration, then you struggle to get any assistance. You have to be a political party member to get any assistance. (Local man, Kosovo, Anderson et al. 2012: 81)

Every organization is under the influence of local community elders and tribal leaders. Aid often ends up in their hands and is not distributed based on need. (Villager, Afghanistan, Anderson et al. 2012: 81)

A community member, Rupa sub-county, Moroto district in Uganda said:

We hear a lot on radios about goats, pigs and other good things being given out, but we do not see any of these in our villages. When we are in town people show us big goats, sometimes referred to as NAADS goats, but these belong to the leaders. Ordinary people in our villages don't have them. (Saferworld 2012b: 5)

Lack of government responsiveness to local concerns, particularly around deficiencies in basic services, can also cause conflict and undermine community capacity to contribute to solving local problems. A closer engagement between local government and informal structures and networks can improve responsiveness. In some instances, greater decentralisation is also found to create opportunities for citizen participation in local governance. This reinforces other aspects of improved governance through citizen monitoring and collaboration in local development programmes and processes.

At District and community levels, the findings of the evaluation show that Reflect Circles have both complemented and reinvigorated decentralised structures ... The involvement of District and community structures in this Programme is also seen as a vital sustainability mechanism. Some respondents even mentioned these decentralised structures should be

capacitated on monitoring and evaluation. (MOWCD and UNDP 2007: 61)

Providers should develop mechanisms for community actors to get involved in monitoring spending. This means changing the relationship between political actors and the poor, based on a relationship of rights rather than of patronage, and recognition of the right of citizens to hold their representatives in government to account. There are initiatives already working in this area that can inform wider policies and the post-2015 framework:

Rather than seeing it as a means to achieve vertical accountability, Public Expenditure Tracking so far has been taken as a tool to be implemented

and reported back to headquarters, or the donor. NGOs are gradually becoming aware of the fact that they have not just started implementing Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys. They have embarked on a creative, demanding and at times political process of developing and shaping an approach that, along with other initiatives, gradually will change relationships at district level in favour of the poor. This vision will greatly improve the impact of tracking. It will possibly help addressing some profound qualities of the Tanzanian culture which prevent citizens, CBOs, NGOs from criticising leaders and holding government to account. (de Graaf 2005: 7)

Box 5 Claiming Rights

Individual and community capacity development has translated in some cases into an increased capacity for collective action to claim rights: 'If I go alone, I cannot do anything; nobody will take me into account. But if we are a group of partners, they will have to listen to us because we are many' (Health practitioner, Mexico, Cortez Ruiz 2005: 139).

The area in which organising for change is most clear is in women's rights. Women in an artisan cooperative in Mexico explain how they claimed their rights:

First, we went to the assembly and our forces were growing and growing. Then we began to join in with other women partners to inform them about the information that we got in the meetings... And then we began to understand the importance of being organised... we are not isolated in seeking for change. Women have organised to claim their rights, to participate, and now that women are organised, men accept our right to participate. We consolidate our advances, and we have created our own spaces because we were well organised ... [at the local level] women now participate in the assembly ... there are women that participate in the meetings and take part in public demonstration. (Cortez Ruiz 2005: 137–38).

Batwa minority ethnic women in Uganda noted a decrease in violence against women and increase in women's participation after NGO awareness-raising sessions with community and police:

He (the perpetrator) can even kill you. But when he is imprisoned, it reduces bad acts. And this happens because we know our rights... it is not like the old days... We have been told about rights through Local Authorities; people come together. Now when we go to bars, there is no more segregation; we are not put to one side, we know our rights. It is both NGOs and Government who have done this. They all have the same approach. (Batwa woman, Uganda, Hampson 2011: Appendix 3)

However, awareness of rights alone is not always enough to enable people to claim them. Structural barriers prevent many people from accessing their rights, often because of poor governance. Poor people in Bihar, India have rights to land in principle, but are illegally denied access by powerful local farmers. The formal system for pressing for rights is ineffective and apathetic:

We reorganised ourselves into a large gathering and once again asserted our demands, but the government remained silent. This compelled us to initiate an indefinite strike. We decided to sit on a peaceful dharna inside the premises of the block office and to continue the protest till our demands were met... (Ekta Parishad and Praxis 2010:21)

Implementation and accountability was also identified as a problem by children in Nicaragua: 'They signed an agreement, but we didn't get a copy of the signed agreement so as to be able to follow up on what promises were kept and what weren't' (Child, San Carlos, Shier et al. 2012: 7). Finally, even implementing actions in accordance with the law may still not be enough to ensure people's dignity and empowerment, showing that the process of 'how' development is done is as important as 'what' is done:

The entrance to the Administration Building has an inelegant ramp...that creates a segregated entry. To make matters worse, a small plaque indicating that the construction company donated the ramp symbolises for disabled people a set of negative attitudes about disability. As one person said, it 'feels like a slap in the face.' Project participants suggested that it implies that the ramp was an afterthought, a charitable contribution from the developer rather than a legally required, integral aspect of the building. (Rattray 2007: 24)



Tribal elders discussing land allocation, Afghanistan.

4.3 Local informal institutions and social networks

Clearing the blockages that keep the poor excluded in the informal domain is very much about measures to stem entrenched discrimination and marginalisation, along gender and ethnic lines in particular, as well as improving transparency and accountability in the same way as at the more formal level. A frequently voiced issue for the those living in poverty is that resources are only available to those who belong to the right family, religious or ethnic group, political party, or gender: 'Every organization is under the influence of local community elders and tribal leaders. Aid often ends up in their hands and is not distributed based on need' (Villager, Afghanistan, Anderson *et al.* 2012: 81).

It is the social norms that are reinforced through informal institutions that marginalise and exclude women and children: 'I was compelled to drop out of school after the death of my father. My uncles inherited all his wealth and refused to share it with my mother. She ... could not feed me, let alone provide for my educational needs' (Ghanaian child, Korboe 2011: 72).

Interventions to reduce poverty and exclusion therefore need to address these norms, and work with the institutions that perpetuate them. Approaches such as *Reflect*, *CLTS* and *Stepping Stones* are effective as they work from the individual level upwards and outwards, building capacities and community networks, and shifting discriminatory attitudes while also strengthening community cohesion. A village headman in Malawi explains how the *Reflect Circle* has helped him on these many levels:

On top of the literacy classes, we gather regularly to discuss problems that affect my community and suggest some workable

solutions in a way that includes everyone. I am also able to serve my subjects better because I can read for myself what the Government is saying rather than depend on others to read for me. I can honestly say that I am now a role model for men in my village because they can see that even the village Headmen is not shy to take part in literacy classes with women. (MOWCD and UNDP 2007: 39).

Those living in poverty need their institutions – formal and informal – to work together more coherently. Formal governance systems need to engage with local traditional and customary systems:

Local institutions are likely to have capacity issues, but are cited by many as key to long-term development, through greater decentralisation and, in the African context, better coordination between local councils and traditional chiefdom authorities.

(Drew and Ramsbotham Accord 23 2012: 33)

Formal and informal institutions need to work together and with the community so that there is a shared understanding of the distributed roles and responsibilities, and the relationships between them. In Karamoja:

Many community members said they were not clear about the role of local councils (LCs) and the types of cases that LC courts are mandated to handle. This was clarified by the police officers; all criminal cases must be reported to the police, who are mandated to handle crime in the country, while some cases of a civil nature, such as disputes between people, or customary land disputes, may be reported to the LC courts. (Saferworld 2012c: 24).

There are many challenges to building effective partnership between formal and traditional/ community leaders. Working in this way means taking risks in order to build trust. For example working with traditional leaders and institutions does not:

provide easy or risk-free solutions: many played their part in both conflicts; they can contradict national or international norms and standards; and they can be socially partisan or politically exploitable. But local communities are often more likely to perceive them as legitimate, effective and – above all – available. They can tap into local expertise and understanding, help to build community capacity, and inform and complement state structures that are in the process of being developed.

(Drew and Ramsbotham Accord 23 2012: 61)

Not working with them however, is a greater risk, since without understanding the local context, systems and practices, development interventions cannot bring about sustainable solutions to

conflict, marginalisation and poverty. Participatory planning and agile learning and feedback loops need to be built into local development initiatives, in order to understand and address inequalities and exclusions that come about through traditional practices and social norms. Attitudinal change is incremental and operates in a non-linear way, triggering changes at multiple levels, as behaviours and expectations change. For example, a *Reflect* literacy circle brings about improvements in literacy and numeracy (linear change), and, over time, changes in attitudes towards women in the community. As women's views begin to be heard and respected, men's attitudes also change. Discussions within circles identify local issues and priorities which can be fed into district planning frameworks (MOWCD and UNDP 2007: 46). Thus, change is occurring at multiple levels simultaneously, and is fed back and forth between people and institutions.

4.4 Citizen-centred governance

Echoing the call for integrated responses to complex lives in Chapter 1, a coherent and holistic approach across all institutional structures can reduce exclusion and discrimination of the poorest and most marginalised and ensure that these institutions work for them, enabling them to access opportunities and support mechanisms. At national and local levels, greater transparency and accountability are key to such an approach.

More coherent local governance also requires greater investment in processes which strengthen the capacities of citizens and communities to hold institutions to account, and to participate in the co-production of services. This means an ongoing dialogue between citizens, NGOs and formal/ informal institutions over how resources are distributed. This is seen as particularly important in post-conflict situations:

It was proposed that NGOs in the peacebuilding and governance sector continue to monitor the extent to which poverty reduction strategies are sensitive to their potential impact on instability or conflict and are tailored to mitigate these risks. Participants highlighted, for example, that a focus in development support on a particular region can fuel ethnic tensions in other regions, which feel excluded from national resources. This was an effective way to achieve reconciliation in post-conflict societies.

(Conciliation Resources 2012: 11)

In Nigeria:

[community-based groups] demand accountability from different actors, including the state and transnational corporations. The emergence of these community-based groups, especially youth organisations and women's groups, has resulted in the creation of new informal structures of governance. (Abah and Okwori 2006: 205)

Key conclusions

- Addressing the constraints and blockages to poor people's access to formal governance structures requires interventions to ensure government transparency, accountability and responsiveness. Mechanisms to foster and support transparency and accountability of local level institutions are also important. Where formal local level institutions lack transparency and accountability, assistance is distributed unevenly.
- To ensure access by the poorest and most marginalised people, services need to not only be available but their quality guaranteed and their performance monitored.
- Local informal institutions and social networks can be prone to entrenched discrimination and marginalisation, especially along gender and ethnic lines. This requires interventions to build capacities and community networks that work to shift discriminatory attitudes. Community cohesion needs to be strengthened in order to address these norms within the institutions that perpetuate them.
- Formal and informal institutions need to work together in order to reduce exclusion and discrimination of the poorest and most marginalised and ensure that these institutions work for them, enabling them to access opportunities and support mechanisms.
- Participatory planning, agile learning and feedback loops need to be built into local development initiatives, in order to understand and address inequalities and exclusions that come about through traditional practices and social norms.

5 Key findings and recommendations for the post-2015 global development framework

The following pages summarise the findings of the report and are designed to provide key messages and recommendations for policy makers. Firstly, we've brought together the key conclusions from each chapter. Secondly, we've summarised the main findings and implications of the research. These are followed by three cross-cutting headline messages, and three realities faced by the poorest and most marginalised which must be addressed if the future post-2015 framework for development is to be successful.

Key conclusions

Development frequently doesn't reach the very poor and most marginalised

- Greater resources need to be put into ensuring that the most excluded can access services. This includes isolated minority and indigenous communities, women without access to transport and people with disabilities.
- Priority should be given to ensuring basic needs relating to food, sanitation and land rights as without these the poorest cannot access services such as education.
- Development interventions need to be underpinned by a systemic understanding of people's everyday lives and the trade-offs that they have to make. Often relatively small factors like the costs of a school uniform are what inhibit access.
- Development interventions need to focus more on challenging social norms which perpetuate exclusion, and behaviours (such as open defecation) which undermine community well-being.
- A holistic approach to development engages with people's realities and builds on local capacities, networks and assets. Such an approach makes it possible to engage with the trade-offs, stigma and dependencies that characterise the everyday lives of people living in extreme poverty.

Development that is sustainable requires meaningful participation that leads to strong local ownership

- Interventions that are not based on a deep understanding of local dynamics are at best perceived as inappropriate, and at worst generate conflict and the marginalisation of some groups.
- Sustainable development processes build local ownership and bring local assets such as knowledge, culture, and networks to the development process.

- Participatory processes need to be built into every stage of the development process: from inception to design; from implementation to learning, monitoring and evaluation. This should be seen as a core part of the post-2015 international agreement.
- Formal and informal networks are key to survival strategies and to empowerment and should be prioritised as a focus of development.
- A lack of well-being (often characterised by poor mental health, a lack of dignity and no hope) is as important to address as material poverty. Participatory processes that empower people, that challenge stigma, and ensure that development enhances dignity and hope are crucial.

Poverty is increasingly characterised by uncertainty, crisis, conflict, insecurity and volatility

- There is a need to develop interventions, technologies, and systems of governance which support populations that are moving or in transition.
- Economic migration is central to the survival strategies of many families struggling to cope with extreme poverty – formal and informal institutions of governance need to recognise this reality and encourage support networks for families that are divided this way.
- It is increasingly necessary to address the huge gap between emergency response measures and sustainable development measures, as the day to day reality for many of the poorest is characterised by crisis.

Poor governance reinforces poverty for the poorest and most marginalised

- Addressing the constraints and blockages to poor people's access to formal governance structures requires interventions to ensure government transparency, accountability and responsiveness. Mechanisms to foster and support transparency and accountability of local level institutions are also important. Where formal local level institutions lack transparency and accountability, assistance is distributed unevenly.
- To ensure access by the poorest and most marginalised people, services need not only to be available, but their quality guaranteed and their performance monitored.
- Local informal institutions and social networks can be prone to entrenched discrimination and marginalisation, especially along gender and ethnic lines. This requires interventions to build capacities and community networks that work to shift discriminatory attitudes. Community cohesion needs to be strengthened in order to address these norms within the institutions that perpetuate them.
- Formal and informal institutions need to work together in order to reduce exclusion and discrimination of the poorest and most marginalised and ensure that these institutions work for them, enabling them to access opportunities and support mechanisms.
- Participatory planning, agile learning, and feedback loops need to be built into local development initiatives in order to understand the inequalities and exclusions that come about through traditional practices and social norms.

Summary findings and implications of the research

Finding	Implication
<p>1 Interventions that improve the lives of the poor frequently fail to benefit the very poor.</p> <p>General infrastructure development and universal access initiatives frequently fail to benefit the poorest. The poorest face major barriers to access: lack of information about what is available to them; hidden costs which are prohibitive for the poorest; urgent short term needs which do not allow the possibility of longer term investments such as education; and discriminatory institutional and social norms which divert resources away from those most in need.</p>	<p>1 Barriers to access for the very poorest need to be challenged directly in order to ensure equity and bring people out of extreme poverty.</p>
<p>2 Inequalities are persistent and perpetuate exclusion at all levels of development</p> <p>Policies need to recognise that social inequalities are intersecting, multidimensional and effect household, community, national and international levels. Inequalities lead to a lack of fair access to basic services but also to hopelessness and negative self-perceptions that reinforce discrimination. The most marginalised may be unaware of their existing rights, lack the knowledge needed to interact with the state, or do not feel they have the capacity to act.</p>	<p>2 Address social inequalities: this means dismantling intolerances and prejudices that discriminate, marginalise and exclude at all levels and in all settings.</p>
<p>3 Current policies and approaches can lead to unintended and perverse effects that create dependencies which make exclusion and poverty worse.</p> <p>People living in the greatest poverty and marginalisation want a different kind of development, where interventions and public policies promote sustainability across economic, environmental and social dimensions. Without responding to all aspects of wellbeing, including hope and dignity, solutions will not be sustainable. Development that is sustainable requires investment in long-term relationships to build local ownership and local knowledge at all stages.</p>	<p>3 In order for development to be sustainable, policies must address the root causes of poverty and marginalisation.</p>
<p>4 Development that is sustainable requires meaningful participation that leads to strong local ownership.</p> <p>Rather than importing 'one-size-fits-all' development initiatives which often fail, the global framework should support the capacities of individuals and groups to design and implement their own strategies. Participatory processes enable people living in poverty to become more aware of their situation and of the potential to pool their knowledge and experience with others. Through this experience, people find dignity, recognition of their abilities, and confidence to tackle problems themselves. Through working with the state to design, implement, and monitor policies, citizens not only gain access to critical resources they also build the state's capacity.</p>	<p>4 Participatory development should be at the heart of interventions implemented through the new framework.</p>
<p>5 Rapid change, insecurity and uncertainty increasingly characterise the environments that the very poorest live in.</p> <p>People are facing extremely fast rates of change. Factors such as food price volatility, violent conflict, climate change and rapid technological development make poverty more difficult to manage; present people with impossible choices; force people to migrate; and lead to instability.</p>	<p>5 Design processes, services and infrastructure which have the capacity to adapt to rapid change and help enhance the ability of the poorest to respond to risk and protect their rights.</p>
<p>6 Poor governance is widely seen as a major contributor to poverty.</p> <p>This means establishing rules of the game that work for the poorest across all levels of governance – from informal to formal; from local through to regional, national and global. It requires strengthening the institutions of governance at all levels, including the networks that connect people to formal and informal institutions.</p>	<p>6 Promote better governance based on values of accountability, transparency, trust, access to information, responsiveness, and effectiveness – values that can best be achieved through citizen participation and influence in decision-making.</p>

Findings 1, 2, and 3 are derived from Chapter 1; finding 4 is derived from Chapter 2; finding 5 is derived from Chapter 3 and finding 6 is derived from Chapter 4.

Headline messages

People living in greatest poverty and those most marginalised want a different kind of development, where interventions and public policies enact principles that are inclusive and sustainable.

According to the poorest and most marginalised groups in over 100 countries, a global framework must guarantee development that leaves no one behind; which does not demand impossible choices for the poorest and most vulnerable; which provides hope; and which recognises and strengthens the networks that hold people together. How this process is supported – by government at all levels, by business, by civil society, and by citizens themselves, is fundamentally important.

The post-2015 framework should:

1 Aim for the eradication of extreme poverty and reduction in inequalities

Specific measurements are necessary to assess the extent to which people living in extreme poverty and marginalisation benefit from a global development framework. This should include a focus on wellbeing that goes beyond material needs to an integrated, holistic approach which considers empowerment, dignity and capacity.

2 Strengthen the individual and collective capacities of people living in greatest poverty and marginalisation

This means strengthening the:

- Capacities of individuals to access resources and to contribute in their own development.
- Capacities of individuals and collectives to represent issues that matter to the poorest, and support collective responses to problems.
- Capacities of government institutions to respond to the needs and interests of people living in greatest poverty and marginalisation.

3 Prioritise participation throughout

Participation can strengthen the capacities of people living in greatest poverty and contribute to the reduction of inequality and eradication of extreme poverty:

- Build participation into every stage of the development process from conception; to design; to implementation; to learning, monitoring and evaluation.
- Include citizen-led regulation and monitoring of services in order to strengthen governance institutions – making them more accessible and accountable.
- Include a measurement for how accountable governments and multilateral processes are to citizen participation.

The success of the future post-2015 framework rests on its ability to respond to:

Highly dynamic contexts

The landscape of poverty is increasingly characterised by crisis, shocks, conflict, uncertainty and volatility. Policies and approaches need to be much more adaptive to continuously changing environments and circumstances.

Social norms that discriminate

Systems and institutions that support people's claims to rights can be undermined by intolerance and prejudice. Challenging unfair power structures that entrench inequalities is critical for positive change in people's lives.

Complex relationships between different problems

Answering one part of a problem does not produce sustainable outcomes for the poorest unless all interrelated issues are simultaneously addressed. Policies need to be underpinned by a deep systemic understanding of people's everyday lives. Agile learning and processes for generating feedback are required at local, national and global levels.

Appendix

In *People's Experiences of Living in Poverty: Early findings for the High Level Panel Deliberations report*, nine key messages emerged from the analysis:

- Extreme poverty is characterised by difficult trade-offs and impossible choices.
- Development interventions that reach the poor, often don't reach the very poor and the most excluded.
- Top-down development programmes frequently fail to respond to the everyday realities of those in poverty, and increase their sense of powerlessness.
- Many poverty alleviation programmes provide short-term answers to issues, but create long-term dependencies.
- Development programmes are often based on simple cause-effect assumptions.
- The poorest people have to deal with unintended consequences and perverse effects that could be avoided with greater local participation.
- Sustainable development requires time and investment in relationship building.
- Effective development processes need to engage much more with power, social norms, customs, attitudes and behaviours.
- Empowerment, dignity and hope are valued as much as livelihoods, education and health.

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