

***Combining Participatory and Survey-Based Approaches
to Poverty Monitoring and Analysis***

Workshop Report

Report on the workshop held between 30 May and 1 June 2001
at the Ranch on the Lake Hotel, Kampala, Uganda

Purpose and scope of the workshop

The workshop was convened by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBoS) and the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project (UPPAP) to explore ways forward for poverty monitoring and analysis in Uganda. Over three days, it brought together a small team of users and producers of poverty monitoring data, and a group of national and international specialists with experience of combining survey-based and participatory research processes.

The workshop's Terms of Reference, Programme and List of Participants are reproduced as Annex 1.

The conclusions and recommendations from the workshop have a medium-term perspective (up to 5 years). They are intended to contribute to current and ongoing discussions on:

- the finalisation of Uganda's Poverty Monitoring Strategy, in the framework of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan 2001-2003 (PEAP2);
- the design of Uganda's second participatory poverty assessment exercise (PPA2); and
- the poverty monitoring survey programme of UBoS.

Specific objectives and outline of proceedings

The workshop had two specific objectives:

- to recommend how best, in the context of Uganda, to combine participatory and survey-based research processes for poverty monitoring and analysis;
- to recommend institutional arrangements which will facilitate:
 - the articulation of UPPAP's participatory research processes with survey-based research by UBoS, and
 - the interpretation and communication of their findings.

Joint reporting of findings from a variety of statistical and non-statistical sources is well established in Uganda. This has been pioneered in the two-yearly Poverty Status Reports and other outputs of the Poverty Monitoring and Analysis Unit (PMAU) of the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MFPED). However, the workshop responded to the wish of the Government of Uganda to go beyond the mere combination of the *results* of survey-based and participatory monitoring, and achieve a better articulation of the relevant *research processes*.

The proceedings were also framed by GoU's general approach to the monitoring of PEAP2. PEAP monitoring is visualised by the Government as providing a two-way flow of information between beneficiaries, service providers and policy makers, covering all of the following:

- ❖ inputs (public spending under various heads);
- ❖ outputs – the quantity and quality of immediate results (e.g. value-for-money in classroom construction);
- ❖ immediate outcomes (e.g. access to services);
- ❖ final (multi-dimensional) poverty outcomes.

The programme was divided into six sessions, devoted to: an overview of current practice; the general rationales and complementarities of survey-based and participatory methods; options for bringing the approaches together; case studies of relevant Ugandan and international experiences; methodological choices in Uganda; and institutional roles and responsibilities. The proceedings were opened by Mr Kenneth Mugambe of MFPED, on behalf of the Director of Economic Affairs, and closed by Prof Ben Kiregyera, Chairman of the Board of Directors of UBoS.

The background papers and presentations that formed the basis of discussion are appended as Annex 2.

Overview of issues and discussion

The workshop provided the occasion for a rich exchange of knowledge and insight from Ugandan and international experience. The participants worked well together, resulting a joint learning process in which positions evolved and mutual understanding was enhanced.

Several topics became a particular focus of attention across the different sessions. The following is a brief summary of the main points under five headings. Major conclusions and practical implications of the workshop are summarised at the end.

The survey programme and what it shows

- The series of household surveys provides striking evidence of widely shared, if not completely even, improvements in household consumption levels in Uganda. The findings from the whole survey agree with those from its panel-survey component (i.e. households interviewed in both 1992/93 and 2000).
- It is possible, in view of early indications from the Demographic and Health Survey, that changes in the different measurable dimensions of poverty (e.g. household consumption and evidence on child mortality) may not be as closely related as they have been in the past in Uganda.
- The strength of poverty monitoring surveys in general, and the Ugandan series in particular, is in providing credible comparative evidence on the consumption dimension of poverty at the household level.

- It seems likely from recent work at the PMAU that there is not a set of reliable “predictors” of consumption poverty in Uganda that could provide a short-cut to measuring it directly.
- On the other hand, it is possible that other types of “light” instrument for tracking poverty in its multiple dimensions might emerge from current research (N. Pouw, ISS, The Hague).
- The progress made in reducing the incidence of consumption poverty under not particularly easy conditions poses a substantial challenge to explanation. This challenge needs to be met by a) more sophisticated statistical analysis, b) more attention to income sources in the surveys, and c) a strong focus on the search for explanations in the PPA. Building up the capacity to undertake the different sorts of required analytical work in Uganda is a priority.

Comparative advantages of participatory methods

- ❖ The strength of case-study methods, and thus also of participatory approaches, is in investigating issues in an exploratory, open-ended way. These methods provide an “inductive” element that complements well the “deductive” (hypothesis-testing) style of the survey and statistical analysis.
- ❖ PPAs, especially second-generation ones like UPPAP, are intended to promote more *use* of information, as well as better information. They provide a process for linking up poor people and policy makers, and not just a useful research technique.
- ❖ The PPA process does not need to limit itself to promoting information and insights from participatory fieldwork. PPAs should use statistical data to contextualise and add weight to fieldwork results.
- ❖ UPPAP has some notable achievements to its credit in assisting progressive policy changes and deepening the PEAP. Factors in this success include a favourable institutional location in the MFPED, and the power of poor people’s “voices” and of concrete examples that policy makers recognise.
- ❖ The comparative advantage of PPA methods does not lie in the measurement of final poverty outcomes. This is best left to different kinds of surveys. Opportunities for using survey and participatory methods to “confirm or refute” each other are fewer than previously thought. In this and other respects, managers of both PPAs and surveys need to take care about the “headline” messages they are giving out, as these can easily be misinterpreted.
- ❖ The main strength of participatory methods lies in identifying and highlighting the range of both final and intermediate processes and issues that are important to poverty reduction. This includes the multi-dimensionality of poverty, but also the factors that cause poverty or make poverty reduction possible, including policy implementation issues.

Combining and refocusing methods

- Maintaining the essential differences between survey-based and participatory approaches is not only the best way to exploit their very real complementarities. It also helps to persuade technocrats and politicians, who like to see a diversity of types of evidence.
- In view of the importance of generating quick feedback on PEAP implementation, there should be a relative shift of attention towards intermediate factors and policy-implementation bottlenecks. This would seem to imply some change in the focus of PPA *research*, and more attention to access to services, etc. in the *analysis* of existing survey data.

Sampling and linkage issues

Different approaches to sampling were extensively discussed, following a basic explanation of the respective rationales of purposive and representative sampling. Three different reasons for exploring a fresh approach to sampling in UPPAP emerged from the presentations and discussion:

- ◆ the growing analytical interest in how people become less poor and hence in investigating poverty by “studying success”;
- ◆ the wish to be able to make generalisable statements that carry weight with policy makers;
- ◆ the desirability of maximising analytical links between survey results and PPA themes and findings.

It was not clear that these concerns all led to the same conclusions about sample design. A background paper from the PMAU established the technical feasibility of a stratified random sampling approach to PPA site selection, within various constraints. It was recognised that the sort of fully-integrated design that formed the basis of the 1995 Tanzania social capital study was not feasible with existing surveys in Uganda. The option of “situating” purposively-selected sites retrospectively by using a simple questionnaire, as in the Ecuador and Pakistan PPAs, was also suggested.

Independently of all these options, a powerful case was made for not “reinventing the wheel” and choosing sites for PPA2 in such a way as to maximise mutual linkages with the panel element of the survey. This is being done on a small scale in current work for the World Bank.

International experience

Case studies from outside Uganda drew attention to a number of further topics, including:

- the value of fieldwork in moderating claims about poverty trends based on ulterior motives and dubious statistics (Indonesia);
- the contribution of community-based information systems to empowerment in the communities that are involved (Indonesia);

- the usefulness of local studies, using different combinations of PRA, household questionnaires, economic assessment of community action plans and training, as a means of exploring national policy issues (Kenya);
- the potential to raise key points arising from this sort of work within a PRSP monitoring process, especially as the PRSP begins to have budget implications for sectors (Kenya);
- the possibility that the proposed 72 sites are too many if Uganda's PPA2 is to tackle the kind of topics suggested, and that, anyway, an intermediate body of work providing deeper analysis is needed to effectively link the surveys and the PPA (Kenya).

Conclusions regarding PPA2

Analytical framework

There was wide agreement on the need to give the second national PPA a strong and quite focused analytical framework to guide the fieldwork and reporting. It was concluded that this should concentrate on addressing unanswered questions arising from:

- ◆ the site and synthesis reports from PPA1;
- ◆ analytical work on the household survey series, particularly its panel component;
- ◆ a review of key implementation bottlenecks -- and intermediate input, output and outcome issues – in PEAP sectors.

Together with the earlier discussion, this has some implications for the three themes for PPA2 outlined in the UPPAP presentation in Session 1. Theme 1 (Deepening the Understanding of Poverty) is easily justified, but it might need to become a bit more selective, taking into account the most pressing issues and the ability to pursue them effectively with PRA-based tools.

Theme 2 (People's Experiences of Selected Policies) was clearly a priority. However, it should not take a "naïve" approach to collecting opinions about policies, but be guided by prior analysis of what is known about key bottlenecks. Theme 2 could perhaps be developed in consultation with expert forums such as the Health Partners' Advisory Committee, as well as with the sector Working Groups for the budget. Effective work on this theme will imply, also, much more attention to research (e.g. focus groups) with service providers, and more institutional linkage into district information and planning processes. A district-specific "module" within the PPA's common analytical framework might be desirable.

Theme 3 (Poverty Monitoring) could perhaps be renamed and refocused on exploring possible *explanations* of trends suggested by the survey evidence. This would not mean abandoning investigation of trends and processes perceived by local people in a number of areas. These lines of enquiry are important to raise important issues for policy attention and further monitoring (e.g. environmental degradation, or empowerment and disempowerment). But they are also valuable for generating explanations (e.g. by suggesting connections between different trends). As far as

possible, Theme 3 should avoid the language of measurement and “indicators” unless steps have been taken to standardise research tools to the point where aggregation and comparison are possible.

Sample selection

There was general acceptance that PPA2’s approach to sampling should be influenced by both:

- the best way of pursuing the questions identified for priority attention; and
- the conditions for satisfying policy makers that the findings are “representative”.

Many participants were convinced of the value of making the PPA2 sites correspond with the 400 covered by the panel element in the 1992/93 and 2000 surveys. This would be a good way of exploiting the complementarity between the survey and participatory approaches. It could create a strong circle of mutual learning between the UBoS and UPPAP-led processes. Other important points of agreement were:

- PPA sampling ought not to be *restricted* to the panel, as this had excluded areas of insecurity, which involves an important dimension of poverty.
- The small numbers of households in the panel (as well as confidentiality issues) would need to be taken seriously. Issues to be explored should include but not be restricted to those arising from the panel data on the sites.
- It was thought desirable to start building a panel element in the PPA, which – if accepted – would mean giving preference to PPA1 sites.¹
- Some oversampling of cases of special analytical interest – e.g. those experiencing sharp or contradictory changes – should be allowed.
- Fieldwork logistics, as well as the ability to establish a good relationship with district authorities, implies further constraints on selection. There is an unavoidable trade-off between local and national coverage.

It was recognised that an implication of these efforts to link the survey work and the PPA analytically is to rule out the proposal to base PPA2 on a statistically representative sample.

The random-sampling option would have had the advantage of permitting some “headline” conclusions applicable to the country as a whole (within large but not abnormal margins of sampling error). That would have been so on the condition that some standardised questionnaires were administered for this purpose alongside the exploratory PRA exercises. However, it is not clear that there are many questions that are better pursued by this type of “hybrid” approach, rather than by either a

¹ An important objection to this needs further consideration: that the PPA1 sites have not yet implemented their Community Action Plans or received the promised seed funds.

proper survey or proper PRA.² Also, the workshop felt that what policy makers are interested in is a broad representativeness that can be achieved as easily with careful purposive sampling as with a random method.³ The details could be left to a technical team, possibly including an international reference group.

The number of sites and the size of the field teams was another issue that needed close consideration. This is because the analytical themes now proposed call for intensive and well-triangulated investigation, and possibly repeat visits to sites. The pilot stage of PPA2 might be used to test what is feasible within given time constraints. In addition, UPPAP might consider fostering intensive sociological studies of issues within its remit, including studies with a longitudinal dimension (i.e. comparisons through time).

Conclusions regarding poverty-monitoring surveys

Three monitoring surveys are already financed, and UBoS will shortly be considering its long-term approach. Many workshop participants took the view that a full integrated survey every five years would be a reasonable objective, and that at least one or two monitoring surveys (for tracking outcomes rather than generating rich material for diagnostic analysis) should be fitted into the intervening years. A two-year interval between MSs had been agreed under the PEAP. This was probably the maximum the Survey Unit could manage. It ruled out additional light surveys in intervening years, even if CWIQ (Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire) surveys seemed feasible and worthwhile, which was doubtful in view of the poor performance of the consumption-poverty predictors noted above.

The population census in 2002 will fill a big current information gap. It will also permit the generation of small-area statistics and poverty maps using internationally tried methodologies.

The inability of the national household surveys to generate small-area data was recognised by the workshop as an important limitation, given the prospect of greater decentralisation of spending decisions in Uganda. The workshop was pleased to note that UBoS is carrying out a data-needs assessment for districts. It was thought that this should be done in consultation with UPPAP and PMAU.

More attention to sub-district data needs has been suggested by the DANIDA-supported pilot exercise. Two ways of meeting these needs are worth exploring. One is the development of detailed poverty maps from the census, as just mentioned. The other is to build on the elements of a community-based information system that already exist under the programme of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD).

The workshop recognised that management information systems of line ministries are a crucial ingredient for an effective poverty monitoring system. UBoS has a

² Some standardisation in the use of some PRA tools might be desirable for other reasons. This would not necessarily compromise the exploratory purpose of the exercises.

³ Credibility with politicians is also crucially affected by being assured that information is not going to be contested by evidence from another source, which means being diligent about cross-checking against other, preferably independent, sources.

responsibility for working with, but not substituting itself for, ministry efforts to improve these systems. They are not working well at present. In several cases, they have proven quite resistant to change, and not entirely on account of technical capacity limitations.

Since budget allocations are about to become more closely linked to performance in meeting PEAP objectives, there is a need for a fall-back position. Feedback will need to be provided by any means possible. This is one of the reasons why the survey-based and PPA components of the monitoring system need to pay closer attention to implementation issues and intermediate output and outcome variables.

It was recognised that various surveys other than those undertaken by UBoS are important to the national monitoring system. They include the Demographic and Health Survey, the National Service Delivery Survey initiated by the Ministry of Public Service, and other research into corruption. There is in this sense room for more than one provider of survey-based information. There was also felt to be some unexploited potential in Uganda for poverty-related social research (e.g. at MISR).

Conclusions on how to strengthen linkages

A major theme that developed in the course of the workshop is that the priority need is to *join up* the survey-based and PPA processes at the *analytical* level – and also to undertake joint dissemination and sensitisation efforts. In contrast, steps to make the participatory work more survey-like in order to provide a direct check on the survey results would compromise its distinctive strengths and would not be desirable. The notion of “combining” methods has the disadvantage of not being entirely clear about this difference between joining up and making more similar.

A circle of analytical linkage, rather than a linear linkage in one direction, is what needs to be created between the UBoS and UPPAP processes. In the medium term, the objective should be to bring together *all* available data sources, including improved administrative statistics. However, it was recognised that the most important immediate task is to draw UPPAP and UBoS into a more closely cooperative relationship. It was thought that this would be favoured by:

- more regular sharing information and analysis, ahead of publication, so that survey findings are taken into account in PPA reports and vice-versa;
- more systematic sharing of analytical papers among monitoring-system partners in Uganda, Washington, UK, etc.;
- cooperation between UBoS, UPPAP and MGLSD on the development of the community-based information system;
- transformation of collaborative relations between UBoS and UPPAP that depend on particular individuals into more formal institutional relations;
- better internal sharing and reporting-back *within* all partner organisations;
- involvement of UBoS in the monthly Poverty Forum meetings;

- consideration of whether communications are limited by solvable hardware or software problems in some partners' offices;
- sharing of experience on how to stimulate interest in data relating to poverty-reduction policies in the mass media, and how to promote its intelligent use;
- collaboration in providing more reporting-back at the grass-roots level, especially in panel areas.

Next steps

The workshop concluded with a strong sense of having broken new ground, as Prof Kiregyera put it in his closing speech. It was agreed that a report on its main themes and conclusions should be widely circulated to participants and other interested parties.

The workshop Steering Committee would reconvene to consider the report and any outstanding issues. The PPA team might then need to sit with UBoS representatives and think through the implications of the conclusions for the design of PPA2. PMAU would also need to revisit the draft Poverty Monitoring Strategy with the relevant stakeholders. The proposed international reference group would need to be formalised and brought in at appropriate moments.

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