

MEASURING EMPOWERMENT (CONTRACT NO. 7138339)

Lessons from Applying Mixed Method Diagnostic Tools for Measuring
Empowerment in Bangladesh, Ghana and Jamaica

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2008

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper describes findings from a World Bank Trust Fund project to develop and pilot a “mixed-method” diagnostic approach for measuring and tracking empowerment in three countries¹. Despite being a relatively cheap addition to existing monitoring exercises this approach has produced valuable policy-relevant findings in areas ranging from policing (Jamaica), delivery of rural water, health and education by decentralized government (Ghana) to social safety net provision (Bangladesh).

The objective of this initiative was not to provide a single “one size fits all” diagnostic tool or set of indicators. Rather, based on the experience and process of developing and piloting these tools, the aim is to synthesise the experience to help in the design and evaluation of programmes and policies. The project arose in the context of the growing body of work in the World Bank seeking greater clarity regarding the concept of empowerment in order to operationalise it more effectively in the design, monitoring and evaluation of development interventions.

Why measure empowerment

Poverty reduction traditionally focuses on stimulating growth (with the assumption that growth will increase employment), and providing resources and services to address needs and enhance material well-being. A focus on empowerment brings an additional emphasis on people’s choices and opportunities. The analytical framework also provides an entry point into identifying tools and indicators for measuring changes in empowerment. Although empowerment is now seen as a legitimate developmental goal in its own right, there is a growing body of anecdotal and case study evidence,² to suggest that empowerment also brings improved poverty reduction outcomes.

Measures of empowerment are important both as indicators of country performance and of individual opportunity. At the macro level, empowerment indicators contribute to the process of strengthening governance and reducing corruption, both important corporate priorities in the World Bank. Measuring empowerment can be considered a complementary approach to top-down reforms because it addresses the capacity of citizens to reinforce change by demanding better governance and hold officials to account. “Empowerment” as a concept moves away from treating people primarily as “beneficiaries,” by treating them as agents capable of effecting institutional change. Empowerment as a means (if not an end in itself) is thus implicit in successful accountability initiatives.

¹ Bangladesh, Ghana and Jamaica. Work was undertaken in Ethiopia but delays beyond our control to the Woreda City Benchmarking Survey mean that we are unable to report on this case here.

² See Alsop et al, 2006.

2. A MIXED METHOD APPROACH FOR MONITORING EMPOWERMENT

The project described below defines empowerment as “the process of increasing the assets and capabilities of individuals or groups to make purposive choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes” (World Bank, 2007). The framework rests on the concept of “asset-based agency,” (which relates to stocks of assets) and “institution-based opportunity structure” (relating to how the “rules of the game” operate). (Alsop et al, 2006:1)

The focus was on producing a practical approach to “operationalising empowerment”³ in relation to the monitoring and evaluation of specific programmes and/or policies based on the experience and process of developing and piloting the tool. This practical approach should then contribute to the future design and evaluation of programmes and policies – i.e. it will be a diagnostic tool using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods which will increase the evidence available for future policy making and implementation.

The diagnostic tools aim to go beyond looking at clients’ access to services or their level of satisfaction (the “beneficiary” model). Rather, they are also intended to measure changes in the capacity of citizens effectively to demand service improvements, and the capacity of service providers to actually provide these services. Identifying these changes requires measurement and analysis of empowerment outcomes (changes in power relations attributable to policy or program intervention) and empowerment processes (changes in perceptions and behaviors indicative of empowerment and attributable to policy or program intervention).

The working hypothesis underpinning the design of mixed-method diagnostic tools is that dysfunctional relations between service providers and users or between government officials and citizens may be symptomatic of deeper, embedded institutional norms that are characterised by inequalities in power. These social structures perpetuate and are in turn reinforced by everyday interactions and negotiations around service delivery and policy implementation. The result is that improvements in policy or programme outcomes will be hard to achieve and sustain without interventions that attempt to tackle institutional norms.⁴ Empowerment and social change require a level of transformation in critical consciousness that challenges habitual⁵ or everyday interaction and decision making.

³ This refers primarily to the kind of engagement citizens have with government officials and service providers.

⁴ Alsop et al, op cit. See also World Bank, 2005. *World Development Report 2006: Equity and Development*, New York: Oxford University Press

⁵ See Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Policies and programs must take into account and respond effectively to this challenge by building individual and group capabilities and by finding ways to influence and change the formal and informal institutional structures that govern people's behaviour and influence the success or failure of the choices they make.

3. THE EMPOWERMENT FRAMEWORK

The framework used for this project draws on sociological literature to focus on the relationship between structure and agency.⁶ Empowerment is defined as “the process of enhancing an individual's or group's capacity to make purposive choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.” These transformative choices can be made in the state, market or social domains. This initiative focused on the empowerment of citizens in the state domain, specifically on their relationship with service providers. The analytical framework demands, however, that we also look across domains to explain empowerment processes and outcomes. Disempowerment in the social domain for example, may limit individual or group agency in the political or economic domains.

Agency is defined as an actor's or group's ability to make meaningful choices – that is, the actor is able to envisage and purposively choose options. For the purposes of measurement a person or group's agency can be largely predicted by their asset endowment.⁷ Assets are the resources that actors call upon to be productive, to protect themselves from shocks, and to call upon when opportunity arises.

The assets requiring consideration in operational work include psychological, informational, organizational, material, social, financial, or human. Psychological assets are particularly crucial to measurements of asset based agency. Nussbaum argues that rational choices are “deformed” by underlying differences in capabilities, which include the capacity to aspire and to imagine alternative options.⁸ Empowerment may require a raised level of consciousness before actors can translate their assets into choices – that is, to become “agents”. Without this change in consciousness, people make choices that are characterized by “adaptive preferences”, or narrow aspirations that reflect a constrained view of life possibilities.

Assets and agency are necessary, but not sufficient, to ensure that actors can actually transform their actions into desired outcomes – this depends on the opportunity structure. The opportunity structure comprises the formal and informal institutions that govern people's behaviour and which influence the success or failure of the choices that

⁶ Giddens, A (1984) *The Constitution of Society Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Polity Press, Cambridge.

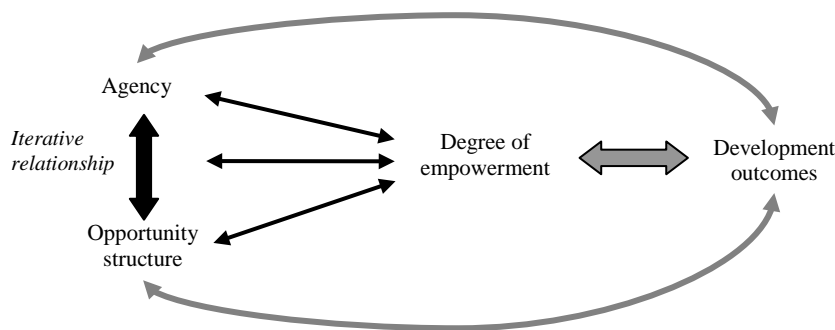
⁷ See for example, Moser C, 1998. “The Asset Vulnerability Framework: Reassessing Urban Poverty Reduction Strategies”, in *World Development* 26(1)

⁸ Nussbaum M, 2000. *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 114

they make. Institutions are the humanly-devised “rules of the game” in society that shape and constrain human interaction and individual choices.⁹ Informal institutions include “unofficial” rules that structure incentives and govern relationships within organizations, including bureaucracies, firms or industries and the informal cultural and social practices, value systems and norms of behaviour that operate in households, social groups or communities. Formal institutions include rules, laws or regulatory frameworks that govern political processes, public services, private organizations and markets.

Drawing on these concepts of asset-based agency and institution-based opportunity structure, the empowerment framework suggests that investments and interventions can empower people by focusing on the dynamic and iterative relationship between agency and structure. Alsop et al summarize this in Figure 1 below. They argue that interventions that improve agency and enhance opportunity structures can increase people’s capacity to make effective choices, and that this capacity in turn can bring about other development outcomes.

Figure 1 - Empowerment analytical framework



Source: Alsop, Bertelsen and Holland (2006)

The analytical framework introduced here refers to a dynamic process through which the interaction of agency and opportunity structure has the potential to improve the capacity of individual or groups to make effective choices. It emphasizes that choice is constrained by social circumstance or social rules, with implications for individual and group expression of agency. Thus, some aspects of tradition and culture are so habitual that they appear “natural.” Development of a more critical consciousness thus only becomes possible as people are exposed to competing ways of “being and doing.”¹⁰ When discussing agency, the distinction between habitual choice and reasoned choice therefore becomes important. Choices consistent with everyday routines and customs may be comfortable but rarely confer greater agency. Thus, a prerequisite to empowerment is an opportunity structure that includes better information, more

⁹ North D C , 199 0. *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, C ambridge, P ress Syndicate of the University of Cambridge

¹⁰ Kabeer N , 19 99. “ Resources, Agency, A chievements: R eflexions on t he M easurement of Women’s Empowerment”, in *Development and Change* 30, 441

equitable rules and expanded entitlements that together, allow allows people to translate their asset base into effective agency.

4. METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES IN MONITORING EMPOWERMENT

Measuring empowerment allows for changes in the availability and exercise of choice to be tracked over time and compared across populations. This allows us firstly to analyse the relationship between empowerment and other developmental goals. Secondly, beyond testing these associations, monitoring and evaluation of the impact of development interventions on empowerment provides the necessary information “feedback loop” that allows for reflection on and improvement of the operational entry points for empowering change.

To date, there have been relatively few attempts to provide the means of assessing whether policy interventions are having an empowering effect. This is not surprising given the challenges involved. While poverty is usually measured by using an income- or consumption-based approach that measures material outcomes, empowerment must be measured in a way that can capture processes and relational changes that are less predictable, less tangible, more contextual and more difficult to quantify.

This raises challenges relating to issues of meaning, causality and comparability. The challenge of identifying meaningful measurements of any dimension of wellbeing requires in the first instance that we can neatly capture the essence of that aspect of well being, and that we can observe changes that are meaningful both in direction and magnitude. We need to identify that a person or group is “more empowered” and to identify “how much more empowered” that person is.

The second challenge of attributing cause and effect can be relatively straightforward when the causal chain is relatively short and other variables can be held constant. Changes in power relations, however, are not single-event outcomes but are dynamic tied up with bargaining, cooperation, conflict and cooption, rent seeking and other forms of contracting. The picture is further complicated by the cross-sectoral nature of empowerment, which can take place in different ways in different domains of life. Additionally, choice can often be implicit and therefore difficult to observe and measure. Indeed, empowerment often allows people to choose not to take action.

The third challenge is to infer comparability across populations. “Aggregation” describes whether the data generated can be aggregated across populations so that conclusions about impact and change can be inferred for larger population groups. Here the major challenge is that empowerment often involves relative rather than absolute changes. Hence an observable move towards a higher state of empowerment for one person or group cannot be assumed to apply to other individuals or groups. This holds both within countries and across countries. An improvement in economic empowerment for a Jamaican ghetto youth is likely to be qualitatively and quantitatively very different from the economic empowerment of a middle class Jamaican professional.

The methodological approach adopted by the World Bank Empowerment team is based on the premise that we cannot measure empowerment in a way that does justice to its inherent complexity and that satisfactorily meets these three criteria of attribution, aggregation and alignment in full. What we can do, however, is to identify measurements that capture, albeit imperfectly, important dimensions of changes in power, and that can be complemented by more interpretive and explanatory forms of qualitative research.

The two types of relevant data that can be elicited using a household survey or score card instrument are (i) recall questions that allow respondents to recall the frequency and types of interaction that they have had with different institutions, and (ii) perception questions which allow respondents to score the qualitative dimensions of those interactions. For example, to generate indicators of service accessibility, respondents can be asked to count (through recall questions) the type and frequency with which they have used different justice system institutions, and then asked to score the effectiveness, inclusiveness and efficiency of those institutions.

It is important not to reduce the measurement and analysis of empowerment simply to a set of indicators. The empowerment framework focuses on a dynamic and iterative relationship between agency and opportunity structure, but also takes into account that there is an internal dynamic between assets as there is between institutions.

By appropriately sequencing quantitative and qualitative methods, it is possible to probe and explain emerging trends and patterns in empowerment. The added value of mixed method approaches to evaluating development interventions and outcomes is well-established. Given the conceptual complexity of empowerment, the added value of a mixed-method approach to measuring and tracking empowerment becomes even more evident.

Working with stakeholders

For the purpose of piloting this activity, it was important to find a program or policy in each country where we could make the case that empowerment contributes significantly to delivering the program objectives. Government receptivity varied. In Ethiopia, for example, the Government found the empowerment work initiated by the Canadian International Development Agency too threatening and had opposed it. At the same time, it supported a planned second round of local government benchmarking to build capacity for the ongoing decentralization, in connection with which it was possible to address supply side accountability. In Jamaica, by contrast, empowerment was an implicit objective of the social policy evaluation unit (JASPEV) located in the Cabinet of Ministers, even if the word was not used explicitly. In Bangladesh the tool was applied in to the evaluation of social protection programmes but in a policy context that highlighted the importance of women's empowerment.

However, whilst it might have been important to find a policy/programme hook with empowerment objectives for this project, the intention was to develop an empowerment diagnostic instrument that could be used on any policy/programme to measure impacts on empowerment, whether they have an explicit/implicit empowerment objective or not.

The aim was to initiate the activity by developing common understandings (using workshops based on background papers and presentations to explain the WB empowerment framework. In Ghana and Bangladesh, workshops took place but the people ultimately involved in the work were a different group, so we relied more on meetings and discussion with core stakeholder groups. In these cases we contributed to broader survey instruments and were able to add empowerment components as something of a *quid pro quo*.

5. THE COUNTRY AND PROGRAM CONTEXT

Bangladesh - context

The objective of our work in Bangladesh was to measure the empowerment impacts on women of seven social safety net programs (SSNP). These programs are:

- **Food-for-work (FFW)** distributes food grains as wage payment to workers in labor-intensive public works programs
- **Vulnerable Group Development (VGD)** exclusively targets poor women and provides a monthly food ration
- **Primary Education Stipend program (PESP)** pays poor families cash to keep their children in school
- **Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF)** provides food to help the poor cope with natural disasters
- **Old-Age Allowance Scheme** is a monthly cash payment to poor men and women who have not worked in the formal sector.
- **Allowance for Widowed, Deserted, and Destitute Women** pays a monthly amount to the target group
- **Allowance for Distressed Disabled Persons** is available to both the mentally and physically disabled.

The study was designed in response to the Bangladesh PRSP, which emphasized the importance of the SSNP for reducing poverty, especially among the chronic poor, and called for more explicit attention to the empowerment of women. One particular SSNP (VGD) explicitly aims to enhance the income-earning capacity and self-reliance of ultra-poor and food-insecure women¹¹, government officials identify women's empowerment as an "additional objective" of another program (PESP)¹² and we believe it is reasonable to investigate whether other SSNP that provide food or income for ultra poor women have an impact on their empowerment.

A substantial literature already exists on women's empowerment in Bangladesh¹³. The literature describes an apparently contradictory situation in Bangladesh, where some of the highest levels of domestic violence against women in the world¹⁴ coexist with

¹¹ WFP (2007)

¹² Bangladesh Ministry of Primary and Mass Education officials quoted in Tietjen (2003)

¹³ See Kabeer (1997), Hossein *et al.* (2006), World Bank (2008) and the references cited therein.

¹⁴ The 2007 WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women found, for example, that physical violence against women in both Dhaka and rural Matlab had been experienced by 30-32% of women in the past 12 months. Comparable figures for Thailand were 8-13%.

dramatic advances in girls' education, increased access to micro-credit and reduced fertility at rates that outclass those in far richer countries¹⁵. Much of this literature considers how micro-credit is affecting women,¹⁶ but it has not focussed on the impact of SSNP.

The World Bank's Dhaka office had already obtained an Institutional Development Fund grant, to be executed by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), to survey the impact of the seven major SSNP on poverty. Funding from the World Bank's Trust Fund for Environmentally & Socially Sustainable Development (TFESSD) enabled us to add an empowerment dimension. Although integrating these new objectives into the SSNP assessment posed challenges, BBS saw the pilot as an opportunity to develop capacity to use mixed-method approaches.

Bangladesh - methodology

To investigate the impacts of the SSNP, the BBS commissioned a national survey of 2,040 beneficiary and 701 non-beneficiary households to evaluate the most important programs. We were able to add an empowerment module to the household survey and a short women's questionnaire for these households. These questionnaires were complemented by community questionnaires, which asked questions about local facilities as well as social norms and practices, and 72 focus group discussions (FGD) to investigate SSNP impacts in more depth.

Combining data from these different instruments enabled us to investigate the impact of the SSNP on female empowerment using the theoretical model provided by the empowerment framework. A complementary objective of this work was to build awareness within BBS regarding the potential for using empowerment indicators in household surveys. Two basic methods were used to analyze the data. Ordered logit analysis (OL)¹⁷ was used to analyze questionnaires from female SSNP beneficiaries, while propensity score matching (PSM)¹⁸ was used to analyze the household,

¹⁵ As summarised by the World Bank (2008) 'Between 1971 and 2004, Bangladesh halved its fertility rates. In much of the country today, girls' secondary school attendance exceeds that of boys. The gender gap in infant mortality has been closed' p3

¹⁶ Hashemi *et al.* (1996), Rahman (1998), Kabeer (1998)

¹⁷ The household survey questionnaire has an empowerment module that includes questions on whether receiving benefits have negative impact, zero impact, small positive or a large positive impact in certain economic, social and civic activities. Ordered logit analysis (OL) allows us to investigate whether factors such as poverty status or location make it more likely that a SSNP beneficiary will find the benefits make a bigger positive difference in any particular domain (for example, keeping children in school). The OL analysis is undertaken with data from female household heads in our sample.

¹⁸ Propensity score matching is a technique for identifying a suitable comparison group to compare to the recipients of a program (the treatment group). PSM finds a comparison group made up of individuals who were not included in the program, but who, given their observable characteristics, had the same probability of receiving the program as did individuals who ended up in the treatment group. We can then look at the program (in this case SSNP) impact as the difference in outcomes between the treatment and comparison groups. See Caliendo and Kopeinig (2005) for an overview of PSM.

community and women's questionnaires. Results were triangulated with FGD findings to understand the empowerment impacts of the SSNP in the economic, social and civic domains of empowerment.

The use of PSM, however, was complicated by an important implication of the empowerment analytical framework, that amongst the poor, women with more information and voice will be more successful at claiming SSNP. So while SSNP may further enhance assets and opportunities, it is important to consider that the women who obtained access to SSNP may have had higher levels of empowerment to begin with. Fortunately, we were able to draw on household, women's and community questionnaires, which together allowed us to indirectly capture a range of variables that may have affected access, character traits such as determination, information about beneficiary selection meetings, and actual attendance at the meetings¹⁹. Another methodological innovation was distinguishing between women household heads who identified themselves as "widowed, separated, deserted and divorced" from women who were still married but de-facto household heads. Making this distinction was important for understanding why some women were likelier to access particular programs.

Ghana - context

In Ghana, we integrated measures of empowerment in a Beneficiary Assessment of the Ghana Community Based Rural Development Project (CBRDP). The overall objective of the CBRDP is to empower rural populations to actively participate in issues affecting their lives by supporting the decentralization process, and more specifically, improving delivery of rural infrastructure in water, health and education. Project components include capacity building for local government officials to deliver better infrastructure, and training beneficiary communities to effectively manage this infrastructure. In around 10% of CBRDP communities Rapid Results Initiative (RRI) techniques for community participatory planning were tested. The CBRDP supports the ongoing decentralization process and complements the many social accountability initiatives that have made Ghana a "recognized leader" in West Africa in the area of social accountability.²⁰

The aims of piloting these measures were firstly to shed light on the empowerment aspects of the project, with particular attention to people's level of knowledge about local government and ways of demanding better service. Secondly, we wanted to test quantitative indicators of empowerment for their potential to contribute a "demand-side" component to the Functional Organizational Assessment Tool (FOAT), just developed by the Government of Ghana to monitor the capacity of local government officials to deliver public services.

¹⁹ More detailed discussion of the methodology used can be found in Yaron (2008a)

²⁰ C., Daddieh, C., & Odei-Tettey, K. (2007). *Building the Demand-Side of Good Governance: Enhancing Conditions for Social Accountability in Ghana* Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

Ghana – methodology

As part of a beneficiary assessment to inform the CBRDP mid-term review a Citizen's Report Card, consisting of a national household quantitative survey, was administered to project and non-project communities (927 households from 49 communities in total). To isolate the effect of project activities, the survey used following sampling framework:

- CBRDP communities without the Rapid Results Initiative (RRI)
- CBRDP communities from the same district with the RRI
- A control group of non-CBRDP (but otherwise comparable) communities where few social accountability initiatives were underway.

The Citizen's Report Card asked questions about citizen's satisfaction with public services and about their willingness and ability to engage with service providers. Since covering questions on all public services would have been unreasonably time consuming, all respondents were asked to respond to questions on governance, while additional questions on education, health, water or roads were asked of different sub-samples. Report Card questions included yes/no responses (for example, for commonly reported problems), some numerical data (e.g. numbers of visits to different types of health facility) and some ranked data (levels of satisfaction with public services). So while the Report Card has a participatory dimension (people stating their opinions) and captures subjective perceptions of government performance, these views are recorded quantitatively²¹.

A Community Score Card was implemented in a sub-sample of six project communities and their associated District Administrations. This interactive tool involved community discussion and scoring of public services followed by interface meetings with service providers. The third tool consisted of a tracking study of trained officials that combined a questionnaire with in-depth interviews, examining training and capacity building delivered by the project. The tracking study, and particularly the qualitative component, was intended to link the training to changes in local government capacity and behavior.

The primary objective of the Beneficiary Assessment was to examine the impact of the project and determine which components had been most effective (and why) but our involvement added a specific empowerment perspective. In practice this meant adding questions (particularly to the Report Card) and analysing discussions to identify (i) whether project activities had affected the ability of beneficiaries to resolve perceived problems with service delivery; (ii) whether training intended to make local government officials more responsive to local development plans had also increased citizens' access to information, citizen voice, or the ability to successfully negotiate to resolve problems; and (iii) whether marginalized groups such as poor people and women had less information and less interaction with local government than did other groups.

²¹ More information on the methodology used and the questionnaire itself can be found in Yaron (2008b)

Jamaica - context

The context for the application of a mixed-methods tool for monitoring empowerment in Jamaica was the Jamaica Social Policy Evaluation (JASPEV) process. This process was instigated through a project to support the Cabinet Office in its public sector reform agenda. The JASPEV project was funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) between 2002 and 2007. The project aimed to: establish and test mechanisms for monitoring and tracking the progress of the long-term outcomes of Jamaica's social policies; deepen the use of information and evidence in policy making; increase citizen participation in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation; improve the coherence of planning and budgeting processes; and increase public sector responsiveness. The JASPEV methodology sought to embed a combination of methods within a participatory process of institutional change at different levels of governance (Bonner et al, 2008).

Our specific objectives in piloting a method for monitoring empowerment within JASPEV were to: (i) develop a set of empowerment indicators for application in ongoing survey instruments (including score cards and household surveys); (ii) test ethnographic techniques to deepen the insights provided by indicators; and (iii) demonstrate the value of a mixed method approach that combines quantitative and qualitative data.

Jamaica - methodology

Developed and applied in this Jamaican context, the World Bank Measuring Empowerment tool combined quantitative scorecard and qualitative ethnographic techniques to measure and analyse the (changing) relationship between youth and service providers, in particular the police. Quantifiable perception indicators were developed and applied with young people in selected urban and rural communities in order to measure changes in empowerment outcomes and processes. These indicators were administered primarily using community score card (CSC) instruments.

The CSCs were sequenced with in-depth Participatory Ethnographic Evaluation and Research (PEER) research, conducted in the same communities by "peer researchers" – who lived in those communities -- and aimed at understanding the social structures of power underpinning social accountability relations. The added value of the ethnographic method is seen in the depth of explanatory analysis that allows the researcher to probe the power relations that underpin habitual, everyday social relations.²² The tool both measures and explains process and relational issues linked to empowerment.

²² This peer ethnographic research is reported in Gayle with Levy (2007). "Force Ripe! How Youth of Three Selected Working Class Communities Assess their Identity, Support, and Authority Systems, including their Relationship with the Jamaican Police", unpublished report, Kingston Jamaica: University of the West Indies

6. KEY FINDINGS FROM EACH STUDY

Bangladesh key findings

*Empowerment impacts of SSNP on female beneficiaries ****

Overall, SSNP contribute to the economic empowerment of women, but impacts are modest for most female beneficiaries. Not all SSNP are equally effective, however, and based on an analysis of female-headed households the FFW appears to have less economic impact than other programs. All the SSNP have a bigger impact on keeping children in school than on access to credit, land, water or electricity. Cash transfer programs such as Old Age Allowances are used to pay for the education of children within the extended family and PESP enables parents to devote their limited resources to other areas. As many households are potential beneficiaries of PESP this finding may explain why this program was the second most voiced preference in FGDs for future SSNP. At the same time, our analysis confirms earlier World Bank work concluding that the extreme poor would gain more from the PESP if there were improved poverty targeting.

The FGDs in particular show that while SSNP do not significantly empower women socially, they do appear to enhance self-worth and self-esteem, and increase their access to information. The discussions revealed the importance of the non-material benefits to the women, who expressed greater awareness of their rights, more self-confidence, and in some instances, greater respect from men in their families and communities. In some cases, increased self-esteem arose simply from beneficiaries bringing income into the household. More often, however, it came about when they received food or income in return for work. Thus, expanding the Food for Work and Money for Work schemes were the most frequently voiced request to policy makers from the focus groups, although these schemes were least effective in achieving economic and social gains (such as children in school, access to credit, clean water, etc.). Policy makers therefore face a challenge in designing workfare programs that deliver more effective benefits for women.

Although SSNP increase self-esteem and access to information, for some women these effects did not translate into social empowerment as measured by observable changes in gendered behaviour, roles and relations (specifically, on their autonomy, involvement in household decision making, and on the incidence of domestic violence). For behaviour to change, the opportunity structure – in this case, the sociocultural norms governing acceptable female behaviour – must also change. Given that such norms can change slowly, the question arises as to whether it is effective for programs such as VGD to focus on female capacity building in isolation, or whether it would ultimately be more empowering to women if their husbands were engaged in the program as well (even if payments were still made to women). It would be worth piloting and evaluating this alternative approach to see if women's increased self-esteem leads to different behaviour.

While PESP increases women's involvement in their daughter's education, VGD may actually trigger negative impacts, perhaps because increasing women's economic assets triggers a conservative backlash from poor and poorly educated husbands. Further in-depth qualitative analysis is needed, however, to understand the circumstances under which these negative impacts occur.

Mixing methods: empowerment indicators and focus group discussions

The empowerment indicators proved useful for revealing differences between the SSNP, as well as different impacts on different groups of beneficiaries, depending marital status, age, education, level of poverty and other characteristics.

Complementing the quantitative survey with a significant number of focus groups nuanced the findings. It would have been preferable to sequence the methods so that the FGDs could have informed the design of the questionnaires, but circumstances did not allow for this. Nevertheless, ***the FGDs proved essential for getting at the less observable but potentially important social impacts of the SSNP, particularly on female beneficiaries' self-confidence.***

The empowerment framework: a tool for guiding data collection and analysis

Rather than treating SSNP beneficiaries simply as program recipients, we took into account their capacity to lobby, and found that women with more information and voice are more successful in claiming SSNP. Hence, while the SSNP may add to assets and increase opportunities, initial levels of empowerment explain why some women are more likely to access SSNP than others. We therefore considered measures related to access to information, ability to attend beneficiary selection meetings and degree of "voice" when using propensity score matching to identify SSNP impacts.

Operationalizing empowerment as the outcome of asset-based agency interacting with institution-based opportunity structure allowed an analytical distinction to be made between different kinds of empowerment impacts. Thus, the analysis distinguishes between enhanced self-confidence or self-esteem (which contribute to greater agency) and empowerment (reflected in behaviour change, such as acting with greater autonomy and making more decisions in the household). This distinction points to the significance of slower changing social norms, which circumscribe women's behaviour, and suggests the potential importance of integrating men (specifically husbands) into the capacity building components of the SSNP that are supposed to change women's behaviour.

Finally, we found it useful to more carefully categorize respondents than usual. It appears particularly important in Bangladesh (and perhaps in South Asia more generally) to distinguish between married women living with a spouse, and married women who are de facto household heads (for example, where husbands have left home but women do not identify themselves as abandoned). Analysis that is restricted

to the “widowed, separated, divorced and deserted” category can be misleading and may lead to inappropriate policy conclusions.

Jamaica key findings

The application of the mixed method tool in Jamaica generated social policy recommendations which included but went beyond youth-police relations. The application of this mixed-method diagnostic tool in the context of social policy evaluation in Jamaica has demonstrated that, if used at periodical intervals, as part of a longitudinal process of policy monitoring, this tool can provide in-depth understanding of power relations -- between young people and the police and in the context of wider authority structures -- that can assist in the design and implementation of policy interventions to challenge and transform those relations. Recommendations included:

- Police-youth relations are at the centre of outsider-insider contact, and are problematic but not intractable
- Social policy needs to address the agency of undervalued youth: Amongst poor urban and rural communities, youth have very little power in the presence of adults
- Social policy needs to rebuild relevant institutions: Within inner city communities, in particular, young people have lost faith in traditional institutions, turning to self-reliance and alternative street/ gang institutions
- Social policy needs to be geared towards employment generation to break the cycle of gun and alternative authority structures
- While schooling is still perceived as fundamentally important institution in framing the life choices of young people, gender is becoming an increasingly significant factor in influencing schooling choices and outcomes

The tool successfully integrated with an ongoing institutional and technical policy monitoring process. We are able to piggyback and get buy-in through the JASPEV process with its commitment to incorporate community views and monitoring into social policy. This certainly provided a useful hook in terms of a project which had empowerment objectives – i.e. increasing citizen and civil society involvement in policy processes – and also helped in terms of working with people familiar with both empowerment issues and the local context (e.g. knowing who would be more receptive to empowerment related work).

The approach in Jamaica identified and adapted existing instruments that had been endorsed by policy makers. The CSC was already being used under JASPEV to look at aspects of youth inclusion. In the case of police-youth relations, the CSC had achieved a degree of acceptance from Ministry of National Security which was planning to adopt and adapt the tool after JASPEV project finished. Existing use of CSCs formed a platform to build on, adapting these and adding the PEER method.

The use of complementary instruments -- the CSC and peer ethnographic method -- added explanatory depth to the CSC scores and narratives, helping

triangulate findings and broaden policy analysis. Adapting the CSC to include empowerment indicators brought it in line with the WB empowerment framework.

There is, however, an apparent, but not insurmountable, trade off between the use of scorecards for local level reflection and action, and the wider use of scorecards in surveys that can generate more reliable and generalisable data sets. Given limited resources and the need for timely data generation, careful consideration needs to be given to the scale and application of the tool in order that it is “fit for purpose”..

The process included capacity building through PEER training. Capacity built of local researchers and government institutions was built but also of local young people doing the ethnographic research. Whilst not all were equally committed or interested, a significant number expressed positive attitudes about being involved and learning from the research. Some also viewed being involved as good for their future employment opportunities.

The monitoring empowerment findings were presented in a way that engaged policymakers. The scores and narratives from the previous CSCs appear to have been used/presented in such a way that policy-makers and implementers were already engaged, and some committed to using them in the future. However, PEER seems to have engaged policy makers in a different way, providing views from citizens that policy makers perhaps didn't usually hear, and interested them in finding out more. The choice of the lead PEER researcher as a presenter appears to have been instrumental in engaging policy makers through his passion, experience and knowledge, which is positive, although there is a risk that if advocacy and research roles are too closely combined through the involvement of a well known policy advocate, then this can give sceptical policy makers an easier option to ignore or dismiss findings.

Ensuring that the analysis becomes embedded in ongoing policy discussions requires persistence and continued backing. The initial interest of both policy makers and implementers in the results produced and the tools used – in particular from the Ministry of National Security -- was considerable and positive. However, the application of the tool in a social policy context, in contrast to a context of more manageable and predictable programme or project cycles, also confirms the continuing challenges of effectively feeding evidence into the design and delivery of policy.

Ghana key findings

Satisfaction with education services is mediated by level of parental involvement:

The household survey found that CBRDP involvement significantly raised parent satisfaction in the area of education by facilitating the construction of schools. Interestingly, parents' level of satisfaction correlated with their level of satisfaction with their Parent Teacher Associations (PTA). The community discussion shed light on this correlation, suggesting that satisfaction with services was enhanced by more direct involvement in educational matters. Discussions also revealed that parents felt particularly out of the loop when local officials used outside contractors to deliver the

infrastructure. Their satisfaction was also tempered by their desire for school construction to be complemented by greater attention to pupil discipline and teaching materials.

There was only limited empowerment of consumers to resolve problems of service delivery: Analysis of the Report Card survey found that a significant proportion of rural citizens were not empowered to address service delivery problems. While the decentralization of water supply (which has been decentralized further than education and much further than health) somewhat increased people's voice, this was not the case in health or education. Health facility users didn't know where to go to address problems and in education, even the parents who did know where to address their concerns go failed to do so. Again, calling on the qualitative data suggested that parents failed to pursue complaints because previous their complaints were either ignored or not addressed to their satisfaction.

The project had only limited impact on knowledge about local government: The Report Card survey included indicators regarding people's knowledge about the responsibilities of different tiers of local government and of how funds were allocated. Analysis revealed that while a modest two-fifths of people surveyed understood the responsibilities of their largely powerless but community-based Unit Committees, only one fifth had a good understanding of District Assemblies (the highest level of local government, with wide responsibilities for development planning and budgeting). There was a similar or even greater level of ignorance among survey respondents about their right to attend local government meetings, see minutes of meetings, and know the content of the budget.

Access to information and knowledge of rights varied with age, gender and wealth: Knowledge about Unit Committees or District Assemblies corresponded to wealth, education, gender and location. Men from wealthier households and with greater levels of schooling were generally more knowledgeable than poorer groups, women, and people living in the Eastern Region.

Qualitative information from the Score Card discussions revealed that information flows from the District Assemblies to communities, however, were weak and that people didn't know what they were entitled to. At the same time, since responsibilities for inputs into schools remains fragmented among different levels of government, people needed the District Assemblies to intervene with the Ghana Education Service, for example, to get more teachers posted to their schools. A conclusion of these discussions was that providing more information to local people would empower them to communicate more effectively with their District Assembly representatives to secure improved services.

The Rapid Results Initiative (RRI) procedures had interesting empowerment impacts: Tested in approximately 10% of projects, they appeared very helpful in promoting greater accountability, transparency, ownership and effective management of associated sub-projects and could be adopted more widely. Their success suggests that community driven development can result in greater empowerment and accountability in

connection with the *project* that is being implemented but this did not lead to improved knowledge of decentralised government. Hence we cannot rely on infrastructure-focused CDD by itself to improve social accountability.

Community based project interventions do not necessarily empower people:

Adding an empowerment focus to the beneficiary assessment resulted in robust feedback to the project regarding the effect of different components on service quality, levels of satisfaction, and the empowerment of local people. On the one hand, it revealed that the CBRDP improved service delivery and levels of satisfaction, albeit to different degrees in health, education and water. But it also demonstrated that community based project interventions do not in and of themselves empower people in the absence of explicit efforts to increase their knowledge about local government responsibilities, their own rights, and effective ways to resolve service delivery problems.

Decentralization does not necessarily empower people: Findings from the Report Card survey and Score Card discussions reveal that decentralization in and of itself has not empowered rural Ghanaians. Individuals do not feel that they understand the responsibilities of decentralized government and the more power a tier of local government has, the fewer citizens know about it. While the decentralization of water supply to the community level, for example increased the opportunity for citizens to voice concerns, many people ignore the opportunity because of the failure of local officials to respond. The situation is worse in health, with a large proportion of facility users ignorant of where to address their concerns.

Given that the amount of funding to local government is expected to increase significantly, with donor support, there is a need to ensure that the poor benefit as much as the non-poor. As the amount of funding available to District Assemblies increases, however, there is a real risk that the disadvantages faced by women and the poor in understanding how District Assemblies function could translate into a disadvantage in accessing District Assembly budgets. Hence, it will be important to monitor empowerment indicators and combine demand-side capacity building with the supply-side (FOAT) measures to be introduced as funding increases.

The monitoring indicators tested by the pilot could be used to monitor national processes as well. Based on findings from the Report Card survey, which was administered nationally to a representative sample of households in project and non-project communities, it is suggested that the following indicators could fruitfully contribute a demand-side component to the FOAT, which the Government plans to use at regular intervals to monitor the impacts of decentralization:

- Satisfaction levels with key decentralized public services
- Knowledge of where to go with problems
- Efforts made to resolve problems, and satisfaction with outcomes
- Knowledge of local government responsibilities and budgets
- Knowledge of rights to attend meetings and see minutes
- Attendance of meetings held by different levels of local government

- Rankings of perceived importance of various factors for determining how much of the District Assembly budget is spent in their community.

The pilot demonstrated the usefulness of triangulating findings from different data-gathering methods. Where the survey demonstrated correlations between different aspects of satisfaction, for example, the Score Card discussions provided an explanation for why people were satisfied in some contexts and not in others, and importantly, what they felt was needed to help them resolve service delivery problems.

Implementing the Score Card methodology was in itself an empowering process. For one thing, the community meetings entailed an exchange of information about services, government responsibilities, and citizen rights. In addition, the interface meetings provided citizens an opportunity to share their concerns with their local government officials in a public forum where officials felt pressured to respond. The meetings also served to inform District Assemblies information that they could apply to other communities as well. Based on discussions of this finding with the CBRDP team and staff from the USAID-funded Government Accountability Improves Trust program, another social accountability initiative, it is recommended that the Score Card be embedded in structured consultation between consumers and service providers as part of a regular process of interaction rather than an ad-hoc event. This interaction could take the form of an initial town meeting with citizens, followed by a Score Card exercise in prioritized areas, and a subsequent town meeting with citizens, service providers and power holders after a reasonable interval of time to report on progress.

7. CROSS-CUTTING THEMES AND LESSONS

Monitoring empowerment is extremely useful where the objective is pro-poor policy. Adding empowerment measures has produced clear policy implications in each country case study. For example:

In Bangladesh we find that expanding the Food for Work and Money for Work schemes were the most frequently voiced request to policy makers from focus groups (as these raise self-esteem) although these schemes were least effective in achieving economic outcomes. There is a need to design workfare programs that deliver more effective benefits for women.

In Ghana we find that individuals do not feel that they understand the responsibilities of decentralized government and the more power a tier of local government has, the fewer citizens know about it. Poorer individuals, particularly women, are the least likely to know about their Unit Committees or District Assemblies. It will therefore be important to develop policy to strengthen the “demand-side” of social accountability to make the decentralisation program work for the poor.

In Jamaica we find that, if used at periodical intervals, as part of a longitudinal process of policy monitoring, this tool can provide in-depth understanding of power relations – in this instance between young people and the police and in the context of wider authority

structures -- that can assist in the design and implementation of social policy interventions to challenge and transform those relations and so improve policy outcomes.

Empowerment indicators can be added effectively to national socio-economic household surveys, although care is needed when faced with capacity constraints:

Measures of social accountability (in terms of information, voice and negotiation) were successfully added to a beneficiary assessment covering project impacts in water, health and education sectors in Ghana. Adding demand-side measures for projects or programs (asking people about perceived impacts) is particularly useful where this complements supply-side information (from those delivering public services, for example) and the public discussion improves the incentives for service delivery. However, we also found that the additional challenge of collecting and analysing relatively large numbers of household demand-side data can be intimidating for capacity-constrained national institutions. In Ghana, the FOAT team did not believe they had the capacity to add a demand-side to their system in the first year of operation. In Bangladesh, the effect of SSNP on economic, social and civic areas of empowerment was identified using absolute measures (such as days when two square meals were not available) and indicators of perceived impact (e.g. scoring the difference that a particular benefit made to keeping children in school). The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics was much less comfortable with the latter type of indicator but the experience of this study should increase their confidence in their selective use in modules of the regular Household Income and Expenditure Survey.

We find that a mixed method analysis that brings together qualitative and quantitative techniques is worthwhile and a range of complementary methods are possible:

The numbers and relatively brief accompanying narrative from the Jamaica study Community Score Cards were already being used and, in the case of police-youth relations, had degree of acceptance from Ministry of National Security. By adding peer ethnographic research the team was able to probe the findings from the scorecards and broaden the context for discussing police-youth relations by looking at social institutions in terms of identity, authority and power relations. Interviews with almost 60 young people, further interpreted by their trained peer interviewers, revealed that police-youth relations are but one expression of the generally hierarchical and often punitive relationships between young people and their elders. Where families are more intact, as in the rural community of Coolblue Gap, youth experience older people as more supportive, but in inner city areas, where adults are also coping with poverty and family breakdown, they are less able to provide support, whether financial or emotional, to young people. Particularly in the urban communities, young people feel excluded and even stigmatized as ignorant, idle and destructive.

The policy questions in Bangladesh required a statistically representative sample of SSNP beneficiaries and comparison with otherwise similar non-beneficiaries. Quantitative survey data at the individual, household and community level provided the

best way of making this comparison for social safety net programs applied across the country. A fairly large number of focus group discussions (FGDs) were held (72) but the principle objective of these was to gain a richer understanding of how SSNP affected beneficiaries. The FGDs in particular show that while SSNP do not significantly empower women socially, they do appear to enhance self-worth and self-esteem, and increase their access to information. The discussions revealed the importance of the non-material benefits to the women, who expressed greater awareness of their rights, more self-confidence, and in some cases, greater respect from men in their families and communities. In some cases, increased self-esteem arose simply from beneficiaries bringing income into the household but more often came about when they received food or income in return for work. Thus, expanding the Food for Work and Money for Work schemes were the most frequently voiced request to policy makers from the focus groups, despite the fact that the quantitative analysis showed these schemes were least effective in improving economic and social outcomes (such as children in school, access to credit, clean water, etc.).

In contrast to the Jamaica case, we used community score cards in our Ghana work to generate a considerable amount of qualitative information. This resulted from the feedback sessions (where community and local government officials engaged in a dialogue based on the scoring of key issues) but also transcripts of community discussion on how particular issues should be scored. The type of Citizens Report Card (CRC) we used provided statistically representative data for the beneficiary assessment and the combination of scored perceived impacts and traditional quantitative measures of change complemented the more qualitative CSC. So, for example, the qualitative analysis of the score card shed light on the CRC finding that the satisfaction with the functioning of the PTA plays a significant role in explaining whether parents are satisfied with the school. We found that while the CBRDP is raising parent satisfaction by resulting in infrastructure improvement, CBRDP could provide additional value by empowering beneficiaries to monitor and contribute to service delivery. The Score Card reveals some of the reasons for dissatisfaction. With the exception of the projects (about 10 percent of the total) where the Rapid Results Initiative was used, CBRDP contracted with District Assemblies for infrastructure improvements, and private companies were awarded contracts to carry out the actual work in the communities. The Score Card transcript shows that communities frequently complained about being “out of the loop” in this process (and this applies to the construction of both schools and boreholes). Interface meetings identified the fact that people felt Assemblyman or Assemblywoman should see it as part of their responsibility to keep the community informed.

Methods for addressing empowerment issues can themselves be empowering:

The experience of using the CSC is that has been that this encourages discussion, reflection and action planning at the local level, while also energising programme and policy level reflections and discussion.

The process of adding an empowerment focus has involved seven steps in each case:

1. Convincing programs contemplating undertaking an evaluation to add an empowerment dimension. In most cases this involved using our technical capacity in M&E to add sufficient value to their existing instruments so that even skeptical stakeholders are willing to incorporate empowerment issues;
2. Working with stakeholders to identify and integrate empowerment indicators in an existing/planned survey instrument;
3. Designing a qualitative instrument to examine demand side issues and/or drill down to the underlying structures that shape/constrain empowerment;
4. Capacity building with stakeholders (in qualitative methods particularly);
5. Implementation of instruments – piggybacking on large national or program evaluations allows a great deal of data to be generated with limited resources.
6. Analysis of findings from the quantitative and qualitative instruments and formulation of results in terms of different types of evidence that can appeal to diverse stakeholders via statistics, trends and stories; and
7. Presentation to and uptake by policymakers. Choice of methods is critical to engaging policy makers from wide range of backgrounds and views as well as the choice of local researchers.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Use empowerment indicators in poverty and social impact analysis at the project, program and country level. There are particular opportunities to:
 - Include empowerment within regular monitoring and evaluation exercises - there may be scope to do this within household surveys as well as CRC and CSC instruments.
 - Track the impact of decentralization on empowerment (as disempowerment of the poor can be an unintended consequence of decentralization)
 - Make links with the social accountability agenda which captures important dimensions of empowerment through “demand-side” measures of information, voice and negotiation.
2. Actively support the use of mixed methods. These can draw on a range of techniques that address the goals of the specific monitoring exercise. More work needs to be done to mainstream the idea of using mixed methods so that even with the usual punishing deadlines it becomes feasible to use qualitative research to frame subsequent quantitative analysis (sequencing)
3. Consider the relationship between assets and opportunity structure when measuring empowerment and developing policy and programme recommendations. The “empowerment framework” developed by Alsop et al (2006) is a helpful and flexible framework that can add value to monitoring empowerment.

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