CHAPTER 6
SOCIAL FRAGMENTATION

Who can afford to help in this age of crisis? —Pakistan 1993

In 10 years, there will be the selection of the fittest, and the least principled in the arena will win. —A middle-aged man, Georgia 1997

What is mine is mine, and what is your is yours; people in this community are very stingy. —Ecuador 1996a.

The fallout from inequity within institutions, the state, civil society, and the household is increasing social fragmentation, resulting in a decline in social cohesion and an increase in social exclusion. Poor people report, that by and large, they have not benefited from new opportunities created by economic and political restructuring. Both in rural and urban areas, poor women and men report weakened bonds of kinship and community as well as direct experience with increased corruption, crime and lawlessness.29 While this was often more pronounced in urban areas, it was experienced even in rural areas. In Ghana, for example, groups of rural women noted the disappearance of social solidarity as a result of labor migration out of the village over a ten-year period:

[In the past], men organized themselves in groups through communal labor to assist each other to build and roof houses. Women supported each other to do farm work such as sowing, weeding, and harvesting. A woman who had recently given birth to a baby was always supported by young girls who cared for their babies and by older women who brought firewood and even treated the babies when they fell sick. Individual families tried to support each other. Women would work in groups in search of food to feed their children. They went to the bush in groups to cut firewood and to burn charcoal to sell. Respect and authority was given to the chief and his elders. (Ghana 1995a)

Similarly, in Yemen, the poor spoke about decreasing trust and the inability of families to cooperate with another. “Local merchants and businessmen are accused of being less supportive and betraying traditional solidarity. This makes it difficult to create local committees or to raise money for operation and maintenance of community projects” (Yemen 1998).

In all societies, people live in social groups stratified by ethnicity, caste, race, tribe, class, or clan. When state institutions cannot provide a secure and predictable environment, unmitigated power asymmetries can become highly polarized. In response, social groups may rally to provide security for their members. However, a strengthening of ties within individual social groups (bonding) can aggravate existing cleavages and further marginalize those who are already excluded from these groups (exclusion). If intra-group

29 See Figure 10, chart on homicide rates at the end of the chapter.
bonding is accompanied by a breakdown of social cohesion among groups, institutions become the agents of partisan interests, rather than the agents of equitable social redress.

In such cases, trust in both state and civil society institutions, whose role it is to mediate individual and group claims, spirals downward. A lack of trust in society’s institutions tends to reinforce people’s desire to seek security within groups, rather than within society, which in turn exacerbates a cycle of insecurity, social exclusion, and increased levels of conflict and violence. Social fragmentation can permeate society, erupting, for example, as domestic violence in the household, rising crime and violence in the community, and massive corruption and civil conflict at the state level. Severe conflict of this type has afflicted over 50 countries since 1980, displacing an estimated 30 million people as a direct result (World Bank 1998).

This chapter first describes the phenomenon of social cohesion, then discusses the reasons for its decline, and introduces a case study of poor people’s experiences with the police. The second part of this chapter describes the phenomenon of social exclusion ends with a case study of widows.

Social Cohesion

You see those few potatoes in the bag? I have just borrowed them from someone, trusting that I will repay with the work of my hands. —A mother, Kenya 1998

Social cohesion is the connectedness among individuals and social groups that facilitates collaboration and equitable resource distribution at the household, community, and state level. Social cohesion is essential for societal stability and for easing the material and psychological strains of poverty. It also affirms individual and group identities, and “includes” rather than “excludes” less powerful groups. Among poor households, social connections are used to build social solidarity, to receive and give emotional support, to obtain help in daily tasks, to access small loans and job leads, and to collaborate to accomplish otherwise impossible tasks, such as house building, or gathering the harvest. A PPA from India, for example, reports that one community had “a considerable degree of social cohesion, which became especially evident in circumstances that were out of the ordinary, such as sudden illness and disease, natural disasters, and accidents. At these times, villagers would pool their resources and energies to provide both financial and moral support to those in need” (India 1997a).

At the community level, cohesion is an asset that provides security, regulates behavior, and improves the standard of living of the community as a whole in matters that include but are not limited to material wealth. The Panama study gives an example of strong cohesiveness sustained by systems of sanctions. In one community, this included imposing fines of five Balboas on men who failed to contribute to community work projects “so that the union that comes from work is not lost” (Panama 1998).

At the state level, cohesive societies are likely to be more efficient and more capital-rich, and hence more productive than fragmented societies. Dani Rodrik (1997) found that the
key to national economic growth during periods of external shocks was the presence of
date institutions that mediated social conflict. Social cohesion is normally accompanied
by political stability, which usually signals the existence of property and citizen rights,
and which encourages private investment from both local and foreign investors.

Robert Putnam (1993) demonstrated that a lack of “social capital” is not merely “a loss of
community in some warm and cuddly sense.” Rather, social cohesion and civic
engagement are “practical preconditions for better schools, safer streets, faster economic
growth, more effective government, and healthier lives. Without adequate supplies of
social capital, social institutions falter and lose efficacy.” Social cohesion also plays an
important role in the way people deal with the psychological aspects of poverty.
Giovanni Sartori (1997:58-69) states that human beings “endlessly seek identity in some
kind of belonging.” Social cohesion counters the psychological isolation created by
poverty in two ways. First, it affirms the humanity of poor people even in the most
degrading physical and economic circumstances. Second, it increases their access to
resources via those same social connections.

The decline in cohesion within the community affects not only friends and neighbors, but
even kin networks and traditional hospitality. In the Ukraine, for example, although
family members, relatives, and close friends have become more important than ever as a
resource, the rising cost of transportation, telephone, and even postage stamps, combined
with shrinking incomes, has diminished the ability to maintain contact, care for elderly
parents, and assist children. Since Ukrainian independence, new national borders have
split many families (Ukraine 1996). In Armenia it was reported that despite the strength
and importance of kinship reciprocity, people are less able to help relatives and the flow
of cash and goods is increasingly confined to parents, children, and siblings (Armenia
1995).

In Apunag, Ecuador, some households reported that in order to save scarce resources for
food, they did not participate in celebrations at all. In Maca Chico, community rituals
have been shortened considerably; while in Melan, fiesta expenditures have been
converted from a community responsibility to an individual household option. Villagers
noted that this tends to reduce community solidarity (Ecuador 1996a).

An older poor man in Kagadi, Uganda, said:

Poverty has always been with us in our communities. It was there in the past,
long before Europeans came, and it affected many—perhaps all of us. But it was
a different type of poverty. People were not helpless. They acted together and
never allowed it to “squeeze” any member of the community. They shared a lot
of things together: hunting, grazing animals, harvesting, etc. There was enough
for basic survival. But now things have changed. Each person is on their own. A
few people who have acquired material wealth are very scared of sliding back into
poverty. They do not want to look like us. So they acquire more land, marry
more wives, and take all the young men to work for them on their farms and
factories distilling gin. So we are left to fight this poverty ourselves. And yet we
only understand a little of it. It is only its effects that we can see. The causes we cannot grasp. (Uganda 1998)

**Why is Social Cohesion Declining?**

*Youth are most affected; they see no real chance for participation in the development of the country. In spite of their education and energy, they are helpless, frustrated, and dangerous.* —Kenya 1997

Around the world social fragmentation was associated with major economic disruptions; anger over the fact that new opportunities were limited to the rich, the powerful, or the criminal; migration in search of employment; an overall environment of lawlessness combined with failure of systems of police and justice; and increased crime and violence.

**Economic Difficulties**

*This is not the desert of sand, but the desert of unemployment.* — Unemployed man, Pakistan 1993

*If a person keeps one chicken which lays an egg every day, then he will have 800 drams a month—the salary of a teacher. If he has two chickens and gets two eggs a day, this gives him the salary of a professor.* —A village official in Goris, Armenia 1995

The world over, decline in social cohesion was linked to lack of economic opportunities, and in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, to dramatic shifts away from occupations that once provided a living wage. While some of the elite have been able to take advantage of new trading and business openings, the poor have been excluded from these opportunities. The perceived unfairness of unequal access to opportunities results in frustration and disorder which further attenuates economic difficulties.

In Armenia, the dramatic drop in the value of salaries has forced professionals and the intellectual elite to abandon their jobs because they are no longer able to live on their salaries. During the summer of 1993, the typical salary of a senior researcher in social sciences was the ruble equivalent of $25, then a normal salary. By November, the average salary had dwindled to $7. By December, a month after the introduction of Armenian currency, it had shrunk to $2.50, although it was soon raised to $5.

In Moldova, “Poverty has created rifts in communities between former friends and neighbors. People are cynical, suspicious, and jealous of other’s success, which they most often attribute to dishonest and corrupt behavior. In their own communities, the poor feel ashamed and constantly humiliated in their encounter with former neighbors and friends who have prospered. This humiliation is poignant in the case of children and young people, who sometimes prefer to remain at home rather than risk their classmates mockery at their old clothes. Although poor people extensively rely on each other at the same time, frequent mutual suspicions and animosity as well as fear of those in authority
often prevent people from cooperating on a community scale to help each other more effectively and improve community conditions” (Moldova 1997).

And in Latvia it is reported that the lack of financial resources has forced people to reduce their socializing outside the family circle, so that the family has become their only shelter, and sometimes the only group that can be trusted (Latvia 1998). Unfortunately, economic hardship touches the household as well, and people reported that the unending problems of poverty created stress, arguments, and even violence within families. A woman in Latvia said that endless arguments have made her sons “aggressive, ready to fight and defend themselves” (Latvia 1997).

In Ukraine, collapse of employment by the public sector has resulted in the poor trying to learn the new ways of trading. The word that has emerged is “Ratitsa,” which literally means to “spin oneself.” “Spinning or hustling to make money refers to the incessant motions of buying and selling, buying and selling, and evokes the tremendous effort needed to work more than one job, and plan ahead in case all attempts at earnings fail.” The poor, those most actively seeking employment, said that the reason for poverty was that “they didn’t know how to work” in the new Post-Soviet market oriented world (Ukraine 1996).

For the poor in developing countries, unemployment seems to have become a fact of life. In Pakistan, the poor said that new opportunities were beyond their reach. In Jamaica, focus groups linked violence largely to economic need. In Kenya and South Africa, the poor not only spoke extensively about lack of wage opportunities but explicitly linked it to increasing violence. In Ethiopia, the poor said that because of unemployment, the unemployed “are exposed to Durayenet, behaviors and acts which are morally unacceptable and disapproved by the family and community at large” (Ethiopia 1998).

Migration

We “widows” are left alone because the men leave in order to work.
—A poor woman, Ecuador 1996a

The cohesion of households, communities, and states begins to erode when men and women are forced to migrate to find employment. Family members left behind for long stretches have less time and fewer resources to contribute to and sustain community relations. In Ecuador, communities feel that “communal organization has seriously slipped recently, partly reflecting that many male members have migrated to the urban centers on the Coast” (Ecuador 1996a). Likewise, in India, “The institutional framework of caste panchayats across the district was found to be under constant erosion. The major factors that were attributed to this by caste elders were migration in search of employment, which highly reduced the opportunities of community gatherings, and change in attitude of the younger generation towards caste norms” (India 1998d).

In addition, migration can reduce social cohesion in the host community. In Ethiopia, for example, prostitution increased as women in the urban areas lost their jobs as maids and were joined by the arrival of more female migrants from rural areas seeking work, all of
whom found no other options (Ethiopia 1998). In Ukraine, migrants reported difficulties in tapping into existing networks in host cities. One man had trouble because, “not being from Kharkiv poses serious disadvantages because he lacks networks of relatives or childhood friends to tap into to locate employment opportunities” (Ukraine 1996).

The South Africa study concluded that the forced removal of blacks during the apartheid era and high levels of migration, mobility, and pervasive violence contributed to the undermining of social cohesion. “The result is that many communities are extremely divided, with little commonality in terms of needs and aspirations” to the degree that “the notion of community is extremely tenuous in South Africa” (South Africa 1998). The same report notes that support by community networks was infrequently mentioned by respondents, and then only in connection with assistance in exchange for labor. The traditional strategy of ubuntu, or sharing whatever one has, had been severely eroded by material and social pressures. Many of those interviewed expressed regret that this custom was no longer followed and noted that the loss of ubuntu places an extra burden on poor families (South Africa 1998).

In Niger (1996), migration of a whole family was viewed as a sign of great distress. “Both the rich and the poor people migrate: the rich leave with money to start a business; the poor migrate to look for food and work, often returning to the village during the period of cultivation. Poor migrants seek employment in unskilled jobs such as making small crafts or selling tea or water. Sometimes they go back to their village with a few gifts — watches or radios — that they sell to be able to leave again. Some come back only with an illness, AIDS, or venereal disease.”

Lawlessness

*When disputes arise between neighbors, there are few legal channels by which to resolve them.*  —Moldova 1997

*Theft from the workplace is not a new phenomenon, but the degree to which it is practiced is.*  —Ukraine 1996.

Poor people frequently report a general feeling that lawlessness, or “normlessness” has increased, accompanied by significant upheavals in norms of acceptable behavior. It is both a cause and an effect of declining social cohesion. When community networks are stretched too thin and there is insufficient state support, community cohesion begins to unravel as norms of reciprocity quickly become norms of opportunism. Communities without cohesion are often characterized by mistrust between neighbors and fear accompanied by high levels of interpersonal crime and violence. Lawlessness degenerates into crime, in the absence of functioning police, courts, and legal systems.

In Kenya, “during difficult times, the poor resorted to stealing from shops or farms in order to survive” (Kenya 1996). In Moldova, people reported that in the past it was rare for people to steal from their neighbors’ homes or fields; nowadays, however, “even the family horse is taken” (Moldova 1997). People report feeling powerless to stop theft. One man reported that he did not have a watchdog because he could not feed it. As a
result, his 300-liter oak wine barrel worth 300 lei was stolen. Because he could not identify the culprit, the police closed the case without making any effort to pursue it.

An overall sense of lawlessness prevails in Moldova. Many people feared going out in the evening because the streets are filled with “aggressive and intoxicated youth.” Brutal attacks on both men and women are common because help is difficult to come by. In one community, a “widow was gang-raped by seven men while her 10-year-old daughter looked on. Three men returned and tried to rape her again, but she managed to escape out of a window. She has since moved in with her sister and is afraid to return to her own home” (Moldova 1997).

When social solidarity breaks down, collective action is difficult and social norms and sanctions no longer regulate behavior. In Panama, researchers found that in communities with low social capital, it was difficult to enforce the most basic norms, even when the benefits to the community seemed clear. For example, in one community the local junta lent money to residents to install electricity in their homes and no one repaid the loans. In another community, if there are problems between neighbors, the arbiter is supposed to be the Represante of the Regidor, “but we do not trust [him]”(Panama 1998).

Disciplining a neighbor’s child was not a good idea in this community: “One tries to call attention [to children who engage in acts of vandalism] and is confronted with profanity.” The lack of trust hinders the organization of activities: “Respect is lost, if someone wants to do something [for community development] . . . always someone steals the money.” In that same community, focus-group participants explained that children are at the edge of violence: “They do not say hello, do not respect [you], they want to beat you up” (Panama 1998). In one indigenous island community, the Sahila worried that norms were not being transmitted to the next generation: “Parents do not offer guidance . . . young men do not go to the fields [to work]; they want to [fish] all day long” (Panama 1998).

In Armenia, researchers found that “self-help groups and indigenous community structures of power outside government have not yet emerged, especially in rural areas. Sometimes people cooperate on a single task — for example, a small group of refugees traveled from Vaik to present their complaints in Yerevan to the government committee on refugees. Such groups dissolve as soon as their immediate task is completed. Most people rely on their own families or cooperate at best with related households to ensure their immediate survival” (Armenia 1995). Similarly in Ecuador, researchers found in several communities that local organizational capacity was inadequate to support community members (Ecuador 1996a).

**Crime and Violence**

*The Mafia is huge, literally in every government body. If children used to play at being Cossack raiders, they now play at being mafiosi with short haircuts, imitating bandits.* —Ukraine 1996

At the extreme, general lawlessness escalates to crime and violence, which becomes a vicious cycle, fed by the absence of functioning systems of communal or formal justice,
courts and police. In the rural areas, theft of one family’s belongings by another family was virtually unheard of in the former Soviet Union. Today, in the Ukraine, rural respondents reported that their storage bins had been raided and livestock stolen. One person reported that a relative’s seedlings were stolen right out of the ground hours after they had been planted! “This rise in rampant village crime represents a sharp break in community cohesion and fractures rural solidarity” (Ukraine 1996).

In Thailand, poor people reported feeling unsafe and insecure. They expressed great concern about their children’s future. Some children have been forced by their parents to drop out of school not to work, but to guard the home from break-ins. In this environment of declining trust and increasing competition, along with decreased free time, people noted the weakening of community groups. Groups reported increased conflict within the household, within the community, and in the nation at large linked to the absence of police (Thailand 1998).

In Jamaica, gang violence prevents the installation or maintenance of infrastructure, which in turn exacerbates crime and war and erodes community level cohesion. Telephones were widely perceived as a mechanism to reduce violence. But in Maka Walk, “Telephone Company [workers] had been stoned by local youths as they began laying lines, so the installation was never complete. An important indicator of ‘community cohesion’ in Park Town was the fact, as participants frequently pointed out, that their one telephone box had never been vandalized” (Jamaica 1997). Violence of this kind frequently seems counterproductive even to the interests of the perpetrators.

Psychoanalysts point out that “in the face of powerlessness, violent and destructive behavior such as trashing shops and cars during riots is experienced as transformative. It isn’t that people are simply destroying the facilities in their communities. They are psychologically transferring the bad feeling lodged within them to the perceived malign environment, despoothing it as they feel they have been despoiled themselves. They are enacting in their behavior an expression of their inner world which is a refraction of their social experience” (Orbach 1999:4).

Participants in Ethiopia PPA made a timeline discussing the rises and falls in crime and violence during the 1990s. The group in Teklehaimanot saw crime increase first during 1990-91, when there was a government transition, and during 1994-95, when a rise in unemployment was accompanied by “loose police control.” The most recent years, 1996-97, have seen a dramatic decline in crime. This was seen as the result of an increase in the numbers of police on the force, especially on the local level (Ethiopia 1998). Thus, while the community of Teklehaimanot drew a strong correlation between rises in crime and a weakening of the State and its institutions, they also observed that when crime was at its lowest, an effective state was complemented by local participation.

In sum, worldwide massive economic, political, and social changes have isolated individuals and fragmented communities. For the poor, the situation is especially acute because they have less flexibility to adapt to dislocation. Those whose “life insurance” is fundamentally social in nature experience increased insecurity and vulnerability. Some
poor people have managed to seize opportunities offered by rapid economic change, and others with good luck and hard work have flourished in these same difficult circumstances. In the Ukraine, for example, the key to moving out of poverty was summarized as, “Connections, individual initiative, and talent” (Ukraine 1996). But overall, those who are poor today clearly see themselves as losers rather than winners as vast changes sweep through their countries. Their feelings of loss and vulnerability are perhaps best exemplified in the way poor people experience a quintessential institution of the state, the police.
Case Study 8: The Poor and the Police

The gradual relaxation of state control has reduced some of the functions of the police. But at the same time, it has also had the effect of reducing state control over the police. For this reason, many people are deeply fearful of the police. Because the state is weak, citizens — especially the poor and powerless — feel unprotected against the police. They have no recourse but compliance when police demand bribes or threaten brutality.
—Ukraine 1996

The presence of dysfunctional police forces plays a substantial role in the deterioration of social cohesion and trust within a society, and the rise in lawlessness, crime and violence. Corruption, institutional failure, and social fragmentation are all brought into sharp relief by attitudes towards the police. The police are said to be among the three most repressive institutions in society (the other two being the military and the household) (Gelles and Straus 1988). When the institutional checks and balances on police action disintegrate, the police force is capable of immense repression and exploitation.

The precise consequences of this repression, of course, differ from context to context, depending primarily on the extent of pre-existing police involvement in society. The countries of the former Soviet bloc, for example, were characterized by an exceptionally pervasive and surveillance-oriented police system. A report from the Ukraine explains:

In discussing perceptions of the police and their relation to crime and [law] enforcement, it should be noted that the Soviet police force was charged with serving the state by monitoring and controlling citizens and preserving order, rather than controlling crime. Soviet citizens obtained their registration (propiska) through the police. It was the role of militia to ascertain that citizens were employed and living where they were registered, and to register marriages and divorces in the internal passports people still use as legal identification. Citizens also applied to the police for foreign passports and visas. (Ukraine 1996)

Around the world, police suffuse society for a range of reasons, such as to wage a “war on drugs,” or to address terrorism and “anti-democratic forces,” and so on. Heightened police presence in communities has noticeable effects. In Jamaica, for example, the development of a special crime-fighting unit has created tremendous social tension:

Police are a central part of the everyday life of the urban poor, yet are perceived as reinforcing existing structures based on fear and divisiveness. The actions of the Anti-Crime Squad, (ACID) and “Rat Patrol” (mixed army and police patrol) were singled out as being brutal and intimidating, particularly by young people who perceive themselves to be subjects of wholesale harassment. (Jamaica 1997)

In South Africa, the police have historically been associated with repressive minority rule, and there are residually poor state/police relations. In much of South Asia, the police...
are associated with corrupt politicians, evoking fear rather than respect among poor people.

**Police Activities**

_The police support their families by just showing their shadow_ —Resident of Akhuria, Armenia 1995

As the above quote indicates, in environments where the police are not accountable, the mere presence of the police can cast such a pall of fear that people are willing to make payments just as precautionary measures to be left alone. The power of the police to dominate, threaten, evoke fear, and demand bribes was pervasive in environments where no one is policing the police. The police are mentioned in about 40 percent of the reports reviewed. In none of the documents is the report favorable. At best, the police are reported as "largely inactive" in their policing roles; at worst, they actively harass, oppress, and brutalize. In countries as different as Jamaica, Uganda, India, and Moldova, police brutality was mentioned as a serious problem facing the poor.

Examples of police indifference are particularly prevalent in Eastern Europe. They are considered “indifferent” because their actions do little to meet peoples’ expectations, as in the following example from the Ukraine:

In 1993, an elderly lady received a large sum of money from relatives living in the U.S. She was robbed on the way to the bank, and immediately filed a report with the police. The police showed her an album with photographs of known criminals. She tentatively identified her attacker, but the police then asked, “If we go to him now, how will we prove that it was he who stole your purse?” Rosa was amazed, since as she pointed out, it would have been very easy for her to identify her purse, which also contained her photograph. A second time, she telephoned the police to report that her Arab neighbor had been badly beaten by armed men demanding money. The police claimed they didn't have enough gasoline to come, although as Rosa pointed out, their station was located only 200 meters from the crime. (Ukraine 1996)

This indifference seems particularly prevalent in cases of violence against women. Rape victims in South Africa report, “Even the policemen are not doing anything about this. If we go to report to them, they always say go find other people who were raped by that person and come back with all the names of the victims, only then they will know if that person is really a rapist. They will ask you, what did you do to get raped? Did you provoke the rapist? What kinds of clothes were you wearing? They ask you all sorts of questions without giving any help” (South Africa 1998).

Along with the problem of indifference by police, corruption proves to be another major obstacle to ensuring adequate protection and justice. In Madagascar, the police and judges, who are supposed to be the guardians of justice, were seen as the most corrupted (Madagascar 1994). The impact of police corruption varies in significance from one
context to the next yet can become pervasive in a particular society because it is self-
perpetuating.

Many reports also note that the police are largely responsible for making informal sector
survival strategies increasingly difficult, by harassing vendors and small traders,
especially women. Women end up constantly on the move to avoid the police, who
patrol unauthorized areas in order to collect bribes from traders and kiosk owners. Such
bribes are mentioned in PPAs throughout the world. In Cameroon, for example, “traders
in food crops mentioned that even where the road is ‘good,’ because of the numerous
road blocks, police harassment and customs check points ‘travel is a real nightmare’”
(Cameroon 1995).

In Georgia, bribes factored into both formal and informal business activities. Small
businessmen are faced with bribes demanded by all officials, including the police, and
extortion from organized crime. Entrepreneurs said that the only way to survive was to
have a *krysha*, a protector, to have good relations with powerful figures in the police
force, and to publicize this fact to all to protect oneself against “sudden accidents”
(Georgia 1997). While police actions can range from indifference and neglect to
pursuing corrupt activities, the severest form of injustice affecting the poor usually takes
the form of violent police harassment of individuals. This can mean being beaten by
Moscow police as suspicious “persons of Caucasian nationality” or in some extreme
cases being “returned in a coffin” (Georgia 1997).

In all countries, minority or “socially excluded” groups were particularly vulnerable to
police extortion and harassment. In Pakistan, researchers found the most extreme case of
insecurity among the Bengali community of Rehmanabad, in Karachi. “They had been
subject to evictions and bulldozing, and on returning to the settlement and constructing
temporary housing of reeds and sacks, have faced on-going harassment by land
speculators, the police and political movements” (Pakistan 1993). Similarly in
Bangladesh, tribal groups had stopped filing cases with the police because they knew that
there would be no action, only further harassment (Bangladesh 1996). In Georgia,
Internally Displaced Persons, in addition to suffering the humiliation of being labeled
“beggars,” reported that even when they had land, their poultry was stolen more often
that of natives, and that the police refused to take an interest (Georgia 1997).

**Coping Strategies**

As the formal state deteriorates, local agents of the state are increasingly able to exercise
power arbitrarily and with impunity. Those poor people who are able to solicit the
patronage of the police fare substantially better than those who are unable to enlist this
kind of support (India 1998d). Two kinds of coping mechanism are identified in the
reports, which correspond to two roles of the police force: maintaining justice and
protecting the public.

*Coping with the Absence of Justice.* Police forces, *per se*, are relatively new phenomena
in many countries, and most had a variety of social mechanisms for preserving order that
predated official police activities. In India, for example, village quarrels and conflicts are
often resolved by the mukhia (village head) joined by four other village members to form an informal committee called a Panch. The decision of this body is widely respected by the aggrieved parties, and such events are almost never reported to the police or taken to the courts (India 1997a).

This form of informal justice follows traditional lines. In some cases, popular courts are established. While these tend to be more democratic than their predecessors, there is no guarantee that they will also be free of repression or injustice. A Jamaican report notes that informal justice systems within poor communities have developed as a response to the lack of law and order. These alternative systems, mainly hierarchical in structure in the form of councils, committees, or even ad hoc groups are headed by dons or other powerful leaders to hand out justice informally. In one instance a cocaine addict was beaten up and driven out of an area, in another a widely accused child beater was “tried by the people” and forced to leave the community (Jamaica 1997).

Neither of these mechanisms for dispensing justice is ideal. In times of institutional crisis, certain groups can become “judge, jury, and executioner” — an exceptionally dangerous state of affairs, particularly for those without power.

**Coping with the Absence of Security.** As observed in times of institutional crisis, those with greater power or resources are able to claim the attention of the police more successfully than those without. If the police are unwilling or unable to provide the protection sought by those in power, other agencies have shown themselves more than willing to step in. In the Ukraine, for example, businessmen frequently feel compelled to have bodyguards because the police are not willing or able to protect private citizens or private property. As a result, mutual dependency is forged. Moreover, many people consider that the local “Mafia” (including ethnic and local gangs, organized crime, and corrupt government institutions) have penetrated law enforcement agencies, and that criminals generally operate with the knowledge and protection of the police (Ukraine 1996). The bond between the police and business interests also contributes to the frequent reports of the police harassing those involved in informal sector business.

Those without resources to pay for added security sometimes agree to combine their efforts in an attempt to secure greater protection. In some villages in Tanzania where cattle theft is high and police presence low, people have banded together to create Sungusungu or security groups within their communities. All the men and women in the village above age 20 are required to join. The young men are responsible for security, and at night patrol the village to make sure that people are not loitering around. Women take turns to prepare food for the guards (Tanzania 1997).

Similarly, in rural Georgia, because of frequent theft of livestock and harvest, farmers take turns watching the fields before the harvest. They have found themselves confronting armed thieves (Georgia 1997).

When protection from the police is up for sale, the poor in urban slums are often trapped between two evils, a corrupt and preying police on the one hand, and slumlords and
gangs on the other. In Bangladesh, slum dwellers noted the lack of assistance from law enforcement agencies. In the slums of both Chittagong and in Dhaka, men reported that “musclemen” regularly harass teenage girls and even kidnap and rape them. Musclemen demand money from the slum dwellers, and threaten that they will burn down their houses if any complaints are lodged against them (Bangladesh 1996).

**Consequences for the Poor**

*The police cannot patrol; they are corrupted.* —Panama 1998

It is important to stress that the corruption of the police has consequences well beyond reduced confidence in them by the poor or other members of society. Many reports, across all regions, mention that reduced trust between groups and individuals occurs as a consequence of an impaired police force, and the consequent increase in crime. The absence of trust in the police prejudices future cooperation both within communities and among groups. When the actions of an ineffective police force reduces peoples’ trust in it, this lack of trust contributes in turn to a further deterioration in the police force’s reputation and effectiveness. Without trust in fellow community-members, there is little hope of positive change. In Jamaica, for example, the PPA noted that existing social institutions in the communities studied have largely failed to reduce violence, leaving an institutional vacuum in many cases. Consequently, to date, the major mechanism to control or reduce the “war” is located almost entirely in the visible presence of different branches of the police force, with widespread accusations of brutality, as well as human rights violations (Jamaica 1997).

In Moldova, increased crime, from pilfering fields to rape and assault, make poor people fearful of venturing out of their homes in villages, towns, and the cities. People feel they are vulnerable to threats, intimidation and all sorts of abuse from those in power. Lack of trust within communities, lack of trust between citizens and their officials, collusion between local officials and police and perceptions of a two-tier system of justice, distrust of the banking systems – all these put “severe constraints on citizens’ initiative and grass-roots activity” (Moldova 1997).

**Policy**

There are no quick fixes. The problems associated with the police are embedded in the problems of state dysfunctionality. Given the impact of crime, lawlessness, corruption and police harassment on poor people’s lives, poverty reduction strategies can no longer ignore the role of police and lawlessness in impoverishing poor men and women. Women are particularly vulnerable and, as has been suggested in Yemen, consideration should be given to the creation of women’s police stations which have similar power, resources, and status as male police stations.
Social Exclusion

You’re not one of us. — Georgia 1997

As people become progressively more isolated, they also cut themselves off from information and assistance that could help them overcome problems and reenter society. — Latvia 1998

Social exclusion emphasizes “the role of relational features in deprivation” (Sen 1997: 16). It refers to the norms and processes that prevent certain groups from equal and effective participation in the social, economic, cultural, and political life of societies, (Narayan, 1999). It is both an outcome and a process that renders similar outcomes more likely. Social exclusion thus involves at least four factors: the excluded, the institutions from which they are excluded, the agents whose actions result in the exclusion, and the process through which exclusion occurs. Social exclusion is a relational phenomenon, implicating those with power and affecting those without. To complicate the dynamic, power asymmetries are observed even within excluded groups.

The PPAs demonstrate the close connection between social exclusion and poverty. Most of the excluded groups — including women, children, old people, widows, and AIDS sufferers — are cut off from the networks that provide access to power and resources. This makes them vulnerable and increases their risk of being poor. Being poor is in itself a cause for social exclusion due to the social stigma poverty carries. While it is possible to break the cycle of exclusion, social exclusion can pass from generation to generation.

A researcher in Mexico asked children how a person could stop being poor. They responded, “Getting an inheritance,” “Receiving money from relatives who live in the United States,” and “Having faith and praying every night.” When asked why there are rich and poor, they answered, “Destiny,” “That’s the way God created earth,” and “The rich are of the devil and the poor of God.” These answers refer to factors beyond their control, beyond personal effort, studying, and working, which are not felt to measurably improve their social or economic class (Mexico 1995).

While exclusion can lead to economic poverty, and while social exclusion and poverty are deeply interconnected, they are not coextensive: “people can be poor without being socially excluded or excluded without being poor” (Narayan 1999:4). Yet discrimination and isolation — the hallmarks of social exclusion — have a profound negative impact on one’s quality of life. There are two aspects of this relationship. First, being poor leads to social exclusion, which increases social stigmatization and marginalization from institutions, leading to greater poverty. Second, while social exclusion may not lead to economic poverty, it is always linked to exclusion from institutions of society and always leads to a poorer sense of well-being.
How are People Excluded?

In rural districts, especially when parents are intimidated by the city, or are not Georgian speaking, they hesitate to seek medical treatment. They don’t know where to take their children, and are afraid they cannot afford treatment. —Georgia, 1997

Each caste group maintains strict norms about interdining and also accepting water from other communities . . . any violation would lead to conflict within the village. —India 1997d

Bradley’s framework describes five main mechanisms of exclusion of increasing severity: Geography, Entry Barriers, Corruption, Intimidation, and Physical Violence. They are now becoming widely recognized as a development problem (Bradley 1994) and were observed operating in the lives of many of those who participated in the PPAs.

**Geography**

We are all poor here, because we have no school and no health center. If a woman has a difficult delivery, a traditional cloth is tied between two sticks and we carry her for 7 km to the health center. You know how long it takes to walk like that? There is nobody who can help here, that’s why we are all poor here. —Togo 1996

Social exclusion can be a function of geography, and there are often direct correlations between rural isolation and poverty (Ravallion 1995). Many PPAs report that poor people in rural villages cannot easily make trips to access healthcare or educational facilities in towns. A mayor in El Quiche said, “The problem or the most urgent need in relation to community health is the lack of money to buy medicine and also bringing sick persons from the farthest villages to the municipality for treatment” (Guatemala 1997b). Poor people in outlying areas not only must find a means to traverse the distance to schools, hospitals, and other institutions, they also lose income by undertaking a long trip.

The poor often live in the most marginal areas, which compounds the cycles of poverty and exclusion. In Bangladesh, the poor live on eroding river banks, the first affected by floods. In rural areas, the poor are often relegated to infertile land.

Urban areas also can generate excluded populations. As the Jamaica PPA reports, “A group of youths argued that through area stigmatization everyone in their community was branded either a criminal, or an accomplice to one, so that they are disrespected by outsiders and the police alike and cannot secure a job or learn a trade. They perceived this leading to hunger, frustration, and idleness, which encourages gang war and gun violence, with death or imprisonment as the ultimate price. When contract work was available to the local male work force, crime and violence declined, increasing again once the contract ended” (Jamaica 1997).
Barriers to Entry

*Kinh people have been applying and writing papers for a year now, and still haven't gotten anywhere. The land tenure situation in Vietnam is precarious without official recognition.* —Vietnam 1996

*Privatizing land consists of wandering among district and national offices for weeks and months at a time.* —Farm worker Moldova 1997

Transaction costs and documentation requirements are the two most common barriers to entry. Transaction costs are any costs entailed in acquiring a good or service above and beyond its actual value. For example:

After receiving a heart operation, hernia surgery, and removal of gallstones in the course of two weeks, Valentina remained in hospital for four more weeks. During that time, most of her elderly parent’s money was spent on her treatment and medication. Each of the nurses had to be paid 10 lei when she was in the emergency ward, otherwise they wouldn’t have bothered to bring her meals and 10 lei so they would be careful when they gave her injections. At the end of the treatment, the doctors demanded that Valentina’s mother organize a dinner for them. She acquiesced, selling some household items to purchase the food, since she feared that Valentina might have to enter hospital again and would depend on the doctors’ good will, if not their skill, which the mother felt was inadequate. (Moldova 1997)

Transaction costs can exclude the poor from accessing the resources and benefits that are supposed to be directly targeted at them: “Not every disabled person can afford the procedures to qualify for disability payments; the medical examination alone is 170 lei, and families outside Chisinau must also reckon in transportation costs for the disabled person as well as the accompanying person” (Moldova 1997).

Barriers to entry involving state bureaucracy commonly revolve around documentation requirements. The state is often inflexible in helping the excluded gain access to resources. The following example from Cameroon noted that “women’s access to national institutions in the Far North is greatly handicapped by the fact that they do not possess national identity cards. Without them, women cannot vote, nor can they initiate a judicial process, nor travel farther than the family enclosure. Because women traditionally have little say on critical issues of inter-household resource allocation and decision making, and owing to the fact that they are illiterate in the language of government administrators, women have little chance of voicing their opinions” (Cameroon 1995).

Documentation as a means of excluding the poor is commonly cited in the reports as a reason for their inability to access resources:
One issue indirectly caused by government but open to governmental solution is that of documentation. Many of the poor interviewed, especially in the cities, expressed frustration over the difficulties of getting access to programs, services, or even employment for lack of needed documentation. A mother in Mexico City spoke of being denied access to a milk-feeding program for her child because she did not have a birth certificate for the child. Men in the same city talked of being refused employment due to the lack of identity (such as voting) cards. Only 15 percent of the sample of the Mexico City area had legal papers attesting to land ownership. . . . If they didn't follow their leader and give him the support he sought, he could arrange it that they be evicted from their place of residence. (Mexico 1995)

Document requirements represent only part of the barrier. Other barriers to entry include the hostility and unfairness that excluded people face when dealing with bureaucracy. Documentation, in this sense, becomes the device through which certain groups are socially excluded, a device that allows the state to humiliate and deny services to certain groups:

While access to the judicial system was perceived to be extremely important, officials are generally said to be extremely rude and unhelpful. Transport availability and costs were also said to be major factor inhibiting such access. “It is difficult to get to the court. It costs R10 to return by taxi from the farm to Patensie, and then R3.50 from Patensie to Hankey.” Further, systemic problems also inhibit access to the judicial system. In the case of maintenance grants, poor women are expected to obtain maintenance from absent fathers if they can locate them. This system places an unreasonable burden on these women, who face hostile and obstructive officials, widespread administrative incompetence, lackadaisical sheriffs who fail to find absent fathers even when given correct addresses. (South Africa 1998)

**Corruption**

*If I had not given them money and presents, I would not have received normal care. I understood that when no one came to care for me the first three days of my stay in the hospital, and my neighbor in the ward hinted that I needed to pay for someone to pay any attention to me. —A patient at a hospital in Yerevan, Armenia 1996*

*In total she received aid from the Executive Committee, the equivalent of one loaf of bread. Real assistance is reserved for friends and family of those Executive Committee workers charged with dispensing aid. —Ukraine 1996*

*The chiefs and headmen no longer care about the needs of their people and have been separated from them in terms of the Administration Act, No.38 of 1927. . . . These acts encourage bribery, as manifested in the money, brandy and stock that chiefs demand from people for giving them*
residential sites. This means that of the land allocated to people, [much] is bought and those who cannot afford this resort to squatting. —South Africa 1998

One way for the excluded to gain access to institutions is to pay bribes. This is frequently done in Central Asia and Eastern Europe where poor people emphasized the importance of connections in getting anything: social security, pensions, jobs, health care, admission to universities, trading licenses. One woman in Donetsk, Ukraine said, “Jobs that pay are only given to relatives or friends” (Ukraine 1996). Connections are often the only means the excluded have for gaining access to entitlements such as health care or judicial process.

Corruption among local officials was noted to be a common problem in all parts of the world. In Madagascar, for example, “The President of the Firaisana takes advantage of his position by commercializing common waters. In a region where water is a rare resource, he said, it is a scandal to see truck drivers channeling water to people for whom it is not destined. There, the president of the Firaisana is the government. People know about these problems, but they do not say anything. [The respondent] said that this is not an isolated case, but happens in many other regions” (Madagascar 1996).

In Uganda, paying bribes for health services seems to be taken for granted. A poor man reported, “In Jinja hospital, you first pay Shs 500/ for the book to have your name recorded, then you pay another Shs 500/ for the doctor’s consultation. In case you are referred to a Chinese doctor, you pay another Shs 1000/. In this case you also have to pay ‘foot allowance’ to the person who takes you to the Chinese doctor. This one is negotiable. Should you be admitted, then you begin paying Shs 500/ per day. And if you make a mistake of mentioning that you are from Masese, you will simply not be treated at all — we are so poor” (Uganda 1998).

Corruption ripples throughout society as increased fearfulness, which is often prompted, and perpetuated, by increased levels of crime. The Moldova PPA describes a man who had been hospitalized for seven months following a brutal beating on the street. “Despite the fact that the police had helped him, he decided not to pursue the case when his attackers threatened his life. They even gave him 80 lei with the demand that he bribe the judge to dismiss the case. [He] complied” (Moldova 1997).

Corruption is significant not only because it makes access harder for the poor in financial terms, but also because it erodes the trust that a society needs to function effectively. Corruption makes equal access and fair treatment from the state impossible for the poor and the excluded and accelerates their disengagement from wider society. Corruption is a central reason why societies grow more insecure. Increasing insecurity leads to deepening social cleavages, increasing social exclusion, and societal fragmentation.
**Intimidation**

*My husband and I are no longer as close as we used to be when I was working — I think it is because he knows that I am solely dependent on him, especially because the children are still young. I am scared of him . . . but I know that I have to do my best and listen to what he tells me to do, for the sake of the children.* —South Africa 1998

Psychological violence is not an uncommon means of isolating individuals and groups. Fifty percent of the PPAs contained some reference to the threat of violence. In general, the credible threat of harm is used by those with power to maintain their dominance over those without power.

Intimidation is observed at every level of society. As a mechanism of social exclusion, it is often used to reinforce social stereotypes and power relations. For example, a PPA from India reports still deeply entrenched exclusion of low castes by high castes. “Mr. Pichhalu Barik’s little granddaughter touched a tube well in the village Khairmal. The villagers refused to take water from that tube well. They called a meeting of the villagers, and gave Barik’s family threat of punishment. He had to apologize to the villagers for the act of his granddaughter” (India 1998a).

In another instance, intimidation is used by local officials to undermine new mechanisms of accountability: “Participants made both collectors and local government officials accountable for setting prices arbitrarily, forbidding producers to sell their produce to other agents, determining the timing of when the produce can be sold, and threatening them with a boycott. Sometimes the farmers said that [in retaliation] the collectors prevent rehabilitation of roads and bridges to prevent farmers from getting their crops to the market. They forcibly obstruct the farmers’ journeys to places of meetings for farmers’ associations” (Madagascar 1994).

Powerful institutions, even when they are obviously helping the poor, can easily slide into use of intimidation to meet their goals and “standards.” In Bangladesh, the Grameen Bank is well known for its work with poor women. Lowest-level bank officials, mostly men, work with women’s groups and enforce weekly repayment of microloans. However, sometimes the zeal and rewards for collection can degenerate into intimidation because the collectors know that the “beneficiaries” have few options. A field worker notes, “Khodeja lives in Hogolbaria. She has been a responsible member of Grameen Bank for awhile and pays her installments on time. Unfortunately, her husband and brother-in-law died in a road accident, so she missed paying her next installment. The Grameen Bank staff forced the other group members and Khodeja’s family to repay the money. ‘They were so cruel,’ women said, ‘If they behave like that again we shall beat them up’” (Bangladesh 1996).

Finally, in South Africa, the threat of violence was reported to be the major form of control by men over women. In discussion around obtaining child maintenance, women repeatedly stressed that they were reluctant to insist on pressing for support, even when
this was a legitimate claim to be backed up by court action, as this would put them at risk. “It is dangerous to go looking for him, you might get hurt” (South Africa, 1998).

**Physical Violence**

*Those juveniles are in another world and don't believe in anything. They don't care if you are really tall [and] built, or tiny, if they like what you are carrying they will take it from you, and if it involves breaking in your home, they'll do it.* —Venezuela 1998

*We don’t fear death because we see it everyday.* —Youth in Greenland, Jamaica 1997

Social exclusion can result in direct physical violence. The world over, fear of repercussions casts a silence around the subject of violence, violence perpetuated by the state and violence against women in the household and in the community. Nonetheless, researchers were still able to record many instances of violence and violence against women. The Jamaican PPA, which investigated the issue of violence specifically, noted that community groups identified over 25 distinct kinds of violence including interpersonal, gang, economic, and political. All discussion group participants, regardless of age, income, gender, or community agreed that violence started when politicians introduced guns into the areas. People reported a shift from political violence to interpersonal and gang based violence. Violence further fragments society as noted in the Jamaican PPA: “Costs of violence can range from weak investor confidence, damage to the image-dependent tourism industry, higher health and police costs, the disaffection and migration of the urban middle class, higher mortality/morbidity rates, reduced access to social services, dysfunctional families, deeper oppression of women, to the breakdown of community spirit and participation, and the substitution of a climate of fear” (Jamaica 1997).

In South Africa, people said that the high rates of violence in the urban areas result in lower migration of children to urban areas. Research teams visiting one area were told about a raid the previous night in which three people had been killed. “On the day the discussions were to take place, the youth were preoccupied with ensuring the safety of the community during the coming night. . . . After the discussion, a group of youths escorted the researcher out of the township for her own safety” (South Africa 1998).

In Thailand, discussion groups identified increased levels of conflict in the household, in the community and with outsiders. In discussion groups in Bangkok, it was reported that many poor people were being attacked by “loan sharks” because of their inability to pay back loans. This had increased feelings of fear and insecurity in the community. On an individual level, the most recurrent theme on the subject of violence was that of domestic abuse of women and children. Domestic violence is rooted in norms of gender inequity and identity and is often linked to alcohol and drug abuse. A woman in Kenya reported, “Both my parents used to drink, and therefore neglected the children. They could not do anything worthwhile to assist us. I got married in 1982 and divorced in 1987. We divorced because my husband was an alcoholic. He started selling property . . . to get
money for alcohol. We had no shamba. When I stopped him from selling things, he beat me. He chased me, and I came to Korogocho” (Kenya 1996). In Bangladesh, when the issue of violence was raised in group discussion, “the women began “speaking in hushed tones and sometimes . . . withdrew from the discussion altogether” (Bangladesh 1996).

**Who are the Excluded?**

The PPAs included in this analysis often refer to the exclusion of particular groups. While the way in which each of these groups is excluded is context specific, the PPAs reveal that certain social differences continue to arise as grounds for exclusion, such as belonging to a particular ethnic, gender, caste, religion, or age group; living in a particular geographic area; or having certain physical disabilities. While we present discrete categories of excluded groups, it is difficult to make generalizations about which groups are the most likely to be excluded in which society and what they are excluded from. Various forms of social difference overlap and intersect in complex ways over time. Some of the most frequent categories of excluded groups are described below.

**Women**

*Everybody is allowed to voice their opinion. In many cases, I'm cut off while I am voicing my opinion.* —A poor woman, South Africa 1998

*The woman who has lost a husband, the woman who is old and can no longer till the soil, the woman who does not have children, the woman who is neglected by her children . . . are the most vulnerable.* —Lubombo, Swaziland 1997

In the overwhelming majority of reports studied, there were important examples of exclusion of women suggesting that they experience exclusion most pervasively. While the exact nature of exclusion was shaped by the culture of each society, the following similarities emerged from the reports.

Women’s identity within the household is traditionally centered on their roles as mother and wife. Women speak of their “obligation to feed the family and care for the children, both materially and emotionally, regardless of the contribution of their husband” (Bangladesh 1996). The primary expected role of family caretaker has made it harder for women to participate in public life. In many societies, women are disconnected from ownership of assets and contact with public institutions. In a discussion among women in Uganda, some said they “wished to have been born a man” (Uganda 1998). As one PPA explains, “Women’s traditionally subordinate position constrains their access to factors of production: they cannot own land, the plots they receive are generally those left over by men . . . they are seldom contacted by extension agents, and they have only residual access to tools and means of transport owned by the household” (Ghana 1995b).

In many cases, the role of wife and mother is reported to be so inflexible that women who fall outside this category are ostracized by individuals and discriminated against by state institutions. In three communities in Nigeria, for example, “spinsters, unmarried
mothers, and barren women are often harassed and insulted by younger men and women who . . . consider them personally responsible for their fate. Hence they . . . carry a lifelong stigma and loss of respect. Economically, these categories of women are perceived as being unable to compete on an equal footing with other women as they have a weaker production base. For example, it was pointed out that these women are suspect when it comes to borrowing money for business ventures or self-improvement. They also suffer threats” (Nigeria 1995).

The increasing role of women in low paid formal and informal job markets has brought new opportunities as well as new burdens to women. New sources of income for women do not lead to a neat shift in their authority within their households or in the communities. Yet despite these inequities and social constraints, some women as seen in earlier chapters, are resisting, walking out of abusive homes and asserting their rights in overt and covert ways.

**Children**

Children ask for uniforms, shoes, pens. We people who labor for others — should we earn to feed ourselves or buy chalkboards? —Poor woman, Pakistan 1993

Why should I study, I know how to add and count, I can count money, rip people off, and cheat on weighing . Nobody is paying me to study, but I make 15-20 lari a month from trade. — A 10-year-old businessman, Georgia 1997

They reproach me for beating my children. But what should I do when they cry when they are hungry? I beat them to make them stop crying. —A poor mother, Armenia 1999

Children are among the most vulnerable groups in society. They have little power or influence over the social processes that govern their lives and little ability to protect themselves from abuse. In Togo, the PPA notes that "customary law considers children as property of their family and gives them no individual rights. The widespread acceptance of highly exploitative labor practices and the occurrence of genital mutilation on girls are among the most extreme examples of the vulnerability of children” (Togo, 1996).

Lacking basic rights, the problems facing poor children that emerge most strongly in the reports are exclusion from education, health care, child labor, abuse, and homelessness. Children are excluded from school for both economic and social reasons. As one report from Nigeria illustrates, the decision to remove boys from school was almost always a result of economic pressures: “Nine children, five girls and four boys, were consulted in the Northeast. All of the boys said that they would like to attend school, but their parents would not send them because they could not afford the fees demanded” (Nigeria 1997). The same report indicates that girls were excluded from education for both social and economic reasons. Similarly, in rural Benin, parents said, “Why should we send our daughters to school? Once they marry they go to their husband, they no longer belong to us” (Benin 1994).
Child labor is another reason for children leaving school. For poor families, the need to provide additional income takes precedence: “It is clear from the children’s statements that the main cause of school dropout was the need to be involved in remunerative activities. For example, one 14-year-old boy living in a rural area dropped out of school to work in a salt packing company. Even though he was a good student and he liked school a lot, he stated that he had to leave school due to financial difficulties and the need to contribute to his family’s subsistence” (El Salvador 1997).

Children not only work, but are often forced into the most risky forms of employment. Child prostitution was reported in many countries. In Panama, “Girls who are twelve or thirteen years old are already women. Drug dealers give them money, they see that they have developed breasts . . . They offer them money, invite them to lunch and buy them new shoes. . . . Fifteen- and sixteen-year-old girls lure the younger ones who sometimes offer themselves to older men” (Panama 1998). The Panama report summarized the career prospects of children in this community: “Young girls end up as mistresses of drug dealers, or as prostitutes. Boys run drugs” (Panama 1998).

Similarly in Benin, “The children are basically on their own, without any education and not even proper respect for the elderly: they’re like street children. They can’t eat regularly, health care is out of the question, and they rarely have real clothes. The girls have no choice but to prostitute themselves, starting at 14, even at 12. They do it for 50 francs, or just for dinner” (Benin 1994).

In rural areas of India, researchers note several examples of bonded child labor in the drought-prone areas of western Orissa. The PPA tells about a 16-year-old boy in bonded labor. “Pachawak dropped out of class 3 when one day his teacher caned him severely. Since then he has been working as child labor with a number of rich households. Pachawak’s father owns 1.5 acres of land and works as a laborer. His younger brother of 11-years-old also became a bonded laborer when the family had to take a loan for the marriage of the eldest son. The system is closely linked to credit, as many families take loans from landlords, who in lieu of that obligation keep the children as ‘kuthia.’ Pachawak worked as a cattle grazer from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and got paid two to four sacks of paddy a year, two meals a day, and one lungi [wrap-around clothing]” (India 1998a).

As in other countries, in Central Asia and East Europe the stress of poverty also leads to children begging on the streets rather than studying in schools. In Georgia, researchers reported that increasing numbers of children have stopped their education. Many work informally with parents, and many work as traders, loaders, and assistants, some do heavy manual work (Georgia 1997). In Georgia, childhood illnesses and injuries have dramatically increased. A doctor from a clinic reported a four fold increase in childhood asthma as parents can no longer afford to move to drier climates for sick children. As children increasingly take on adult tasks rates of injuries have gone up. “Now that children take over adult tasks such as chopping wood, gathering fuel, and cooking on dangerous kerosene heaters, they frequently injure and burn themselves” (Georgia 1997).
Finally, the PPA in Brazil (Brazil 1995) has shown that many street children do have families and are not orphans. Extreme poverty, the father’s absence, and mother’s struggling alone to make ends meet push children onto the street to earn incomes. Children may work as vendors, car wash guards, shoe shine boys, and grocery carriers. Only a minority engage in criminal acts. However, they are subject to abuse, harassment, and pressures to join gangs as a way of creating a family in the isolation of the streets. The Brazil report included the following depiction of the life of a destitute child. “He is often the victim of robbery and physical abuse by both peers and adults. He may join a gang as a way of creating a new “family” in his state of isolation. He may be harassed, bullied, or lured into criminal acts by gangs of youths and criminals. Surrounded by the drug subculture, he may begin to abuse drugs. Many street children develop extremely low self-esteem, apparently in response to the disparagement and abuse they regularly face in the course of making a living” (Brazil 1995). In South Africa, children’s gangs were reported to revolve around sniffing glue, drinking alcohol, and taking drugs. Yet these activities, it was stated, “enable the child to become part of a supportive group” (South Africa 1998).

Children are in many ways the least equipped to cope with poverty: “The constant emotional stress of being poor and of the struggle for survival is revealed in many of the studies. This is most extreme in the case of street children. Here, analysis of self-portraits drawn by some of the children indicates stress, anxiety, emotional regression and the lack of a real connectedness with the world” (South Africa 1998).

State institutions in South Africa have been ill-equipped for coping with the problems of poor children. Children often must beg, wash cars, and make a living in other ways that are at odds with city by-laws. In addition, street children are excluded from the justice system and have few rights. The South Africa PPA notes that poor children are “treated as youth offenders in terms of the Criminal Procedures Act, instead of being identified as neglected children and treated in terms of the Child Care Act. Children claim to have been assaulted by the police, used as informants, and forced to pay bribes” (South Africa 1998).

The Poor

The authorities don’t seem to see poor people. Everything about the poor is despised, and above all, poverty is despised. —Brazil 1995

If you are hungry, you will always be hungry, if you are poor, you will always be poor. —Vietnam 1999a

A poor man looks weak and has a big family; daughters from such families are prone to early marriages and pregnancies and usually leave their children with the old poor grandparents. —Busia, Kenya 1996

While social exclusion and poverty are distinct concepts, they are deeply interconnected. Poor people remain poor because they are excluded from access to the resources, opportunities, information, and connections the less poor have. For poor people in
developing countries, this translates into inter-generational poverty. In addition, poverty is socially stigmatized, making it even harder for poor people to gain access to the networks and resources they need for survival. This vicious cycle is difficult to break.

Being disconnected from powerful institutions limits the information that the poor have about entitlements, scholarships for children, and their own earnings. In Armenia, in cash-starved villages, some mothers who gave birth at home did not receive child benefits because they could not pay the nominal fee ($5.0) required for the birth certificate. In Macedonia, despite poverty, women could not access scholarships or credits for their children because of lack of information and lack of trust in the outcome even if they bothered to do so, since “only those who have the connections in the services” will get them (Macedonia 1998).

Poverty carries with it a painful and humiliating stigma and invariably leads to exclusion. After the complicated birth of her last child, one respondent spent some time in hospital. “Her husband was out of work at the time. When she was discharged from hospital, she owed more 20 lats, which was all the savings the family had. The hospital told them that, by law, they were entitled to be refunded this money from the municipality, and they were given a receipt. A few days later, she went to the municipality office to get her money, but the employee on duty threw her receipt at her, refusing to handle it, [saying,] ‘You have paid it yourself.’ No explanation was given, and no refund was made” (Latvia 1998).

Because norms and networks provide people with self-respect and standing within the community and provide access to local resources and safety nets, being cut off from social networks and unable to comply with social norms is extremely painful and humiliating for poor people. People often prefer to go further into debt than to be excluded from important community activities: “Ceremonies traditionally also entailed important obligations for guests, who were obliged to come with gifts or money. Poor Moldovans say they are now forced to choose between refusing such invitations because they lack appropriate clothing and money for gifts, and borrowing money so they can meet their obligations. [A man] from Ungheni had to decline several wedding invitations last fall, something he says he had never done in his life. But refusing to attend the wedding of his sister's daughter would have been dishonorable. He therefore borrowed 35 lei for the wedding gift” (Moldova 1997).

Similarly in Benin, "There was the case of a man who let his father die to save money for the funeral. He could have spent the money to take his father to the doctor, but then he would not have had enough money for a good funeral, and that would never do. He was too afraid that people could come one day to him and say, 'When your father died, what were you able to do?'' (Benin 1994).
**The Elderly**

*If I laid down and died, it wouldn’t matter, because nobody needs me. This feeling of my own powerlessness, of being unnecessary, of being unprotected is for me the worst of all. —An elderly woman, Ukraine 1996*

*Tell them, ask them to take me. I can’t live this way. In an old people’s home, no one will blame me for being old. I don’t want to accept help from others. —An old woman, Armenia 1995*

The treatment of old people is culture specific. In most of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the elderly are treated with deference and respect, while in other cultures, particularly in Eastern Europe, where the state assumed responsibility for the welfare of the elderly, many elderly have fallen into excluded groups as people fight to survive. With the collapse of social safety nets in the former Soviet Union countries over the last decade, old people have become extremely vulnerable. According to a respondent in Ajara, “In ten years, there won’t be one pensioner still alive” (Georgia 1997). The vulnerability of old people is compounded by the rapidity of the social collapse. Where old people could once expect security in retirement, now they see their situation as hopeless: “I worked my whole life. For 42 years I was officially employed. My husband and I never had to deny ourselves anything. We had really exceptional savings. I was at peace. I thought, even if I don’t have children, in my old age, I’ll be well enough provided for that even if I get sick or something happens, I’ll have the money to hire a caregiver or a nurse to look after me. I’ll have money for good food, medical care, for my funeral, and for other things. And now I’m a beggar. I don’t have anything” (Ukraine 1996).

Isolation, loss of status, and powerlessness was reflected in many experiences reported by the elderly. In Armenia, an elderly woman recounted:

My husband died a long time ago; we didn’t have any children. In Baku I worked for 40 years as a railroad guard. My sister was killed in Sumgeut [an industrial town in Azerbaijan and the site of anti-Armenian violence in February-March 1988]. Her children went to Russia, but I don’t know exactly where. We came to Yerevan, and from there a bus brought us here. [After privatization], I gave my land to my neighbor. We agreed that he would work it and give me two sacks (100 kg) of wheat flour. Autumn came and I went to him, but he kept delaying. I went ten days without bread. Probably my neighbors gave him a hint, for he finally took pity on me and sent me two sacks of barley flour. It was impossible to eat it, but what could I do? I don’t want to live like this. I go into the street, and children yell, “There goes the beggar!” The children evidently pick this up from the adults. I have one very kind neighbor, Ashot. He helps me with everything. He planted my garden, gathered the harvest and gave it to me. But he wants to emigrate. How will I live without him? I have asked Ashot and the village chairman to help me move to an old peoples’ home. They say, “Auntie Violetta, why should you go to such a place?” I help many people — I sew blankets for them, mattresses, they have even come to see me from Vaik. One day
I got up and there was nothing to eat. It’s unbearable to wait, to hope that someone will bring something . . . I left a note in my house so that no one would be blamed for my death, and I decided to throw myself off the cliff. On the road, I ran into the chairman of the neighboring village. I couldn't help myself; I started to cry. He calmed me down, for which I am grateful, and convinced me to return home. I am not complaining about people. Ashot supports me, but soon even he will leave. They say there’s an old people's home in Yerevan. Tell them, ask them to take me. I can’t live this way. In an old people’s home, no one will blame me for being old. I don’t want to accept help from others. (Armenia 1995)

To cope, elderly pensioners in some East Europe countries cancel their life insurance to save costs (Latvia 1998). In Moldova, with increasing costs of health care, the elderly poor, "tend to ignore their own illness, which they interpret as an inevitable part of growing old, or simply of less importance given few resources and the competing needs of younger family members," Moldova, 1997.

In Vietnam one of the main groups identified as poor is the elderly, especially those who were ill, or who live on their own and have poor children. Lack of savings, a significant indicator of poverty, was found to be particularly acute among the elderly who can not access the labor of children and hence are considered poor risks for loans. Leaders of a woman’s union that provided credit said, “We cannot give them loans because if they die, we won’t get the money back” (Vietnam 1999a). The strong desire by poor, elderly parents not to be burdens on their poor children — who are already deep in their own struggles — emerged in many places. “We are nearly dead now; we do not have any desire for ourselves; we just hope our children will not be poor.” In Ecuador, in the Sierra communities, the elderly, widows and others left alone were identified as the poorest because of their inability to adequately exploit their land resources on their own, (Ecuador 1996a).

With increasing economic stress and breakdown of family solidarity, the elderly are emerging as a new category of excluded poor in countries across Africa and in Asia. Where social networks are stressed, the most vulnerable then resort to begging. In Madagascar, "Begging is primarily adopted by those who don’t fit into the community, namely divorced wives, widows, old people, the disabled and those with no children" (Madagascar 1996).

Ethnic Groups

Most of the drop-outs are found among the indigenous people — if they ever start school. —Vietnam 1999a

They have always excluded us Mayas, they have discriminated against us. They cut down the tree, but forgot to pull down the roots. That tree is now sprouting. —Guatemala 1997a

Social exclusion on the grounds of ethnicity is a common theme running through the reports. Power relations in heterogeneous societies always favor some groups at the
expense of others. In India, exclusion on the grounds of ethnicity is perpetuated by the rigidities of the caste system: “It is observed by Gandas of Khairmal that, even in public institution like schools, their children take mid-day meals sitting at a distance from other children. One Anganwadi worker had to leave the job because she did not want to clean the utensils touched by Ganda boys and did not like to take care of the Ganda children. The practice of untouchability was also reported from other villages” (India 1998a).

Some forms of marginalization are geographical, such as in India where the native Adivasi tribal population is pushed to the degraded forests and eroded hill slopes, scrubland, and rocky soil, by settlers. They become sources of agricultural labor for others, or encroach upon common property resources that are rapidly diminishing (India 1998b).

In Uganda, “After the community had finished drawing its village social map, we wanted to know what future aspirations the community had. One participant proposed that something be done about the poor situation of the Batwa. At this point it emerged that none of the [Batwa] had had their households included on the village map. Worse, not a single person from this small ethnic group had turned up for the meeting. A separate effort was made by the research team to interview some Batwa families. Two women were found in the neighborhood. One summed it up for us thus: ‘We only gain value in the eyes of the Bafumbira when we are working their gardens. In other instances we are invisible’” (Uganda 1998).

Social exclusion on the grounds of ethnicity is a key to understanding who gets resources. In Vietnam, for example, ethnic considerations have been key in determining access to education: “[In the whole district] there are two Chau Ma children going to school. They do not want to go the school, for the Kinh children are beating them up . . . Teachers are available although most of them only speak Vietnamese. The rate of Kinh children going to school is much higher than that of the ethnic groups. Most of the dropouts are found among the indigenous people, if they ever start school. The reasons for the low attendance vary but the most common are labor needed at home, long distances, no roads, dangerous passages over water, no adequate book and clothes, not understanding Vietnamese, not being made welcome by the Kinh children” (Vietnam 1996).

**People with HIV/AIDS**

> A person with AIDS suffers a lot because there will be no communication whatsoever because people will get afraid of him and he will end up without friends. —South Africa 1998

> AIDS knows no boundaries. —Uganda 1998

Myths and stereotypes that surround AIDS have caused sufferers of the disease to be cut off from social networks, the critical survival asset for the poor. Stereotypes against HIV/AIDS sufferers are heavily culturally specific. In Eastern Europe, the negative associations ascribed to drug-users and homosexuals have excluded sufferers; in Africa, the disease is associated with prostitutes, women, truck drivers, and with poverty.
A key problem for those with HIV/AIDS is shame, denial and social isolation, and losing access to the social networks they need in order to cope with the psychological and material consequences of illness: “A major fear associated with HIV/AIDS is the fear of social isolation that would result for a household and individual if the knowledge of infection became public. . . . This causes many to hide the fact of infection, thereby hampering efforts to bring the issue into the open to further public education” (South Africa 1998). Fear also leads to the widespread attitude that “if you just ignore the symptoms . . . [then] they will go away,” particularly since HIV/AIDS has become associated with death, orphans, and destitution (Uganda 1998). The behavior of health providers, the “rudeness and moralistic attitudes” of clinic staff who work with HIV/AIDS patients, discourages the poor from seeking crucial services (South Africa 1998).

AIDS has consequences beyond the individual. Whole households may face isolation. In Burkina Faso:

AIDS widows . . . have been chased with their children from their villages. They end up in the city, arriving with nothing, knowing almost no one, and looking for work. They share a common stigma with the older women found at the Center Delwende de Taughin, in Sector 24. Both have been accused of witchcraft and chased from their villages after an unexplainable death. These new type of young, homeless women are accused of the deaths of their young, seemingly fit, husbands. What makes them different from the older women and much more vulnerable in the city is that they are probably in danger of being infected themselves. Moreover, they arrive not alone, but with small children, too young to help find work and survive. With the increase in AIDS cases over time . . . the numbers of these women, socially ostracized, will continue to grow as well. (Burkina Faso 1994)

The issue of HIV/AIDS and its severe consequences on households and society were discussed in most PPA reports from Africa including South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania, Mali, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Zambia, Swaziland, Senegal, Ethiopia, Cameroon. HIV/AIDS was also identified as an issue in Thailand. (Case Study 2 in chapter 3 offers additional information from the PPAs on HIV/AIDS).

**The Disabled**

*Disabled children are not seen as human beings; they are isolated at home and not sent to school.* —Kabale focus group, Uganda 1998

Disability is frequently reported as one of the characteristics of the “very poor.” Issues of access, both to physical and social space, have emerged. A blind woman from Tiraspol reports:

For a poor person everything is terrible — illness, humiliation, shame. We are cripples; we are afraid of everything; we depend on everyone. No one needs us;
we are like garbage that everyone wants to get rid of. . . . Families on the edge of indigence or already in debt are often unable to treat [their] chronic or serious illnesses. Maria . . . recently discovered several lumps in her breast. The family already has such a large debt from her husband’s treatment that she has refused to even consult a doctor, although she realizes she might have cancer. A disabled man in the district of Balti reported similar behavior on the part of his wife: “She has a serious liver disease and even though I tell her to go to the doctor, she won't. She is afraid of paying money.” Even when poor people do start treatment, they sometimes find they can't afford to complete it. A respondent reported she had come down with pneumonia. She borrowed enough money to buy ten doses of penicillin, but only had nine injections, since she could not afford a tenth syringe. (Moldova 1997)

Social exclusion can still continue even when the basic economic concerns of disabled people are met:

Before the earthquake, Armenians were unaccustomed and often repulsed to see people with any sort of deformity, regarding birth defects and handicaps as shameful. Families often hid handicapped children at home so they would not reduce the marriage chances for the “normal” children. Since the earthquake, considerable aid has gone to the disabled. In Giumri’s Austrian Quarter, the disabled, along with their able-bodied relatives or guardians, have occupied 100 specially designed apartments well supplied by electricity and cooking gas. The disabled have “patrons” in Europe who send money and clothing, and even pay for holidays. Yet the disabled remain isolated. Lack of special transport confined them to a single neighborhood, special school, small church, local polyclinic, and small shop. The able-bodied population living in the earthquake zone who lost close family members and remain ill-housed and needy feel they have suffered just as much as the disabled, and consider it unfair that “all the aid” goes to the “handicapped.” As a result, the disabled are prey to name-calling and hostility when they venture from their immediate surroundings into Giumri. (Armenia 1995)
Case Study 9: Widows

When my husband died, my in-laws told me to get out. So I came to town and slept on the pavement. —A middle-aged widow, Kenya 1996

Even before the funeral of the deceased husband, some widows are mistreated by the in-laws who take all the property, including the children. —Mbarara focus group, Uganda 1998

We did not start our analysis with the idea of featuring widows as an excluded group. But the data suggest that in many cultures, among the poor, becoming a widow is tantamount to “social death.” Widows are seen as harbingers of death and bad luck, and are considered burdensome, useless, and easy prey, and were often identified as the poorest of the poor. In Swaziland, women said that the hardship of widows was made worse by a Swazi custom that regards them as bearers of bad luck and imposes upon them social isolation during a prolonged period of mourning (Swaziland 1997). The combination of social prejudices, kinship customs, and lack of accountability on the part of state institutions helps explain why widows face great risk of social exclusion and poverty. This case study will examine the problems of widowhood by providing answers to two questions: How and why are widows excluded, and how do they cope?

How and Why are Widows Excluded?

If the woman has no children at the time of widowhood, she is asked to leave immediately, sometimes blamed for the death, and even labeled a witch. Relations ensure that she leaves with nothing but her clothes. —Tanzania 1997

They do not make an economic contribution to the household

They do not possess any kind of skill. —India 1997b

As an Indian report notes, widows are assumed to be an economic burden on the household: “They are wholly dependent on their family for care and support as they do not have any earnings of their own. Socially, they are often neglected and considered a burden on the family. The general perception is that they do not make any significant economic contribution to the family and that they do not possess any kind of skill” (India 1997b).

Despite this perception, widows frequently do work, but their range of possible activities is often severely limited by unpaid childcare responsibilities. The lack of economic productivity, in other words, may have more to do with the constraints placed on widows than with the women themselves. A widow in Guatemala observed, “The widows don’t have anyone to help them, and they don’t have even a small piece of land — not even to have a house, never mind to grow crops” (Guatemala 1994a). Further, many cultural traditions and legal systems deny widows access to the resources once controlled by the
household. She often cannot fall back on her original social networks for support, because she was expected to sever those ties upon marriage.

For many women, finding socially acceptable remunerated work is challenging enough without the stigma, childcare responsibilities, and grief of widowhood. Yet in the absence of assets, opportunities, and social support, widows must work endlessly to survive. One widowed mother of six who weaves textiles, collects wood to sell, and works occasionally as a laundress, said, “We are poor because our work does not permit us to eat. What we earn from our work is sufficient for one or two days and then we have to look for work for the next days. We have pain every day. We never rest, ever” (Guatemala 1994a).

They do not possess assets of their own

After the death of my husband, his brother married my husband’s second wife and took all documents related to the house that my husband owned. Now I’m neither owner nor renter, he rents four of the six rooms and he keeps the rent. My brother-in-law has rented some of my children. I work as a maid and sell sand that is used for washing dishes. I collect this sand around the neighborhood. I eat what I can find and it is not everyday that I eat. —A widow in a neighborhood of Bamako, Mali 1993

In many traditional societies widows are often expropriated of the family assets when their husbands die. This means that they experience a drastic fall in income at a time when they can least afford it. The economic hardship suffered by widows is exacerbated by the discrimination against widows in credit markets, which makes it harder for them to reacquire assets. This theme was highlighted in women’s discussion groups:

In the case of widows, male relatives of the husband (generally his brothers) will claim rights on household property unless the male children are old enough to inherit, taking away means of production and transport, and even their house. In some areas of Africa, widows are supposed to stay inside their house for a whole year, thus being practically forced to abandon whatever income-generating activity they had and to depend on charity. The custom whereby brothers-in-law “inherit” widows along with property represents one of the best outcomes, as it affords women the possibility to maintain the usufruct rights over their household property and provides them the protection and status deriving from a husband. (Benin 1994)

And in Nigeria, “it was pointed out that these women are suspect when it comes to borrowing money for business ventures or self improvement. They also suffer threats to their privacy and property. In particular, widows and barren women lose their husband's property to relations of the husband in accordance with traditional family rules” (Nigeria 1995).
They are expected to fulfill social responsibilities

_Bereavement and funerals can cause poverty._ —Kenya 1997

Despite the economic loss resulting from their husband’s death, widows are often expected to participate in expensive community undertakings, the most obvious of which is paying for the husband’s funeral. Funeral costs can be exceptionally high, especially as a percentage of a poor person's income. In some countries, arrangements exist for an extended family network to contribute to fees. If no such network exists, however, the widow will sometimes have to pay for the appropriate expenses herself: “Bereavement and funerals can cause poverty. In Kisumu, the widow(s) and children are often left bankrupt. This marks the beginning of poverty for the bereaved family members” (Kenya 1997).

In South Asia, social obligations include finding a dowry for their daughter’s marriage:

Rehala lives in Mahya Bagra. She is 35 years old. Rehala’s husband died ten years ago while leaving her three children to bring up alone. Her son married and went away having squandered all her savings. She works as a maidservant. Both her daughters have married, the eldest to a rickshaw puller and the second to a day laborer. When they married, Rehala said she could not give dowry. Every day the men are demanding it. They want gold, furniture, utensils and mattresses. She thought her son would help out but he is only concerned for himself. She already has an outstanding loan of Tk 30,000 and feels she will never be able to repay the loan and give the dowry demanded by her two sons-in-law. (India 1998c)

They are poorly provided for by state or community safety nets

_If assistance . . . comes at all, no one ever knows what happens to it._

There are very few assistance programs that directly assist widows. Often widows have to find assistance by qualifying for a second category of assistance, such as pensions or government transfers to the poor. Furthermore, widows, like other poor and excluded groups, are poorly positioned to gain access to government policies; powerlessness in the face of political indifference and corruption contributes to their economic hardship:

If assistance for people from different social groups comes at all, no one ever knows what happens to it — there is anarchy in our village, and I wouldn’t like to talk about this. Village authorities often act in defiance of the law. The mayor does not even observe his daily schedule. Villagers need these meetings to have the opportunity to submit their applications or proposals. (Collective farm worker, Cahul district, Moldova 1997)
How Do Widows Cope?

They seek informal employment

For a woman it is a problem to start life afresh. —Tanzania 1997

As noted above, widows work to help mitigate their situation. They are often barred from formal employment due to gender discrimination, and widows are forced to find work in the informal sector (MacEwen Scott 1995). A group of women in rural Tanzania reported, “For a woman it is a problem to start life afresh. . . . Sometimes women engage in businesses like selling food in the open markets, do piecework, or prostitution. Many lacking education do not know their legal rights and end up moving with drivers of long-haul trucks along the Dar-Malawi or Rwanda roads. They come back when they are pregnant” (Tanzania 1997).

In Macedonia (1998), a widow explains that she begs. “Everyday she goes to buildings or stands in crossings and begs with her three year old child. She earns around 150 dinars a day. She goes to beg by bus, but she does not pay her fare because the drivers already know her, and they do not ask for money . . .” Her children do not go to school because she doesn’t have enough money.

The struggle to live touches widows in many countries. “Mai is a 37-year-old widow whose husband died when she was three months pregnant. Unable to work while pregnant, and struggling to raise two other young children, she quickly fell into debt and had to mortgage their land to buy food. Mai currently works as a domestic servant, but she is still 2 million VND in debt. She currently goes to work from 6:30 A.M. to 5 P.M. and lists her main difficulties as having the money to buy back her land and then loneliness. Her dream now is to save enough capital to raise pigs and ducks, while her daughters dream is freedom of debt for her mother” (Vietnam 1999).

They withdraw their children from school

We simply have to survive. —Moldova 1997

One way in which widows survive is to make the difficult choice of taking their children from school. In this event, girls are more likely than boys to be withdrawn so that they can provide income through child labor or do housework while the mother works: “One young mother of four keeps her three school age children out of school so they can help scavenge cardboard. She explained, ‘We simply have to survive. If we had nothing to burn, we would die. My children can’t go to school because without them, I wouldn’t be able to gather enough cardboard every day’” (Moldova 1997).

They access state or community entitlements, where they exist

Without pensions . . . many households and communities would collapse. —South Africa 1998
If widows are elderly, pensions can be a vital source of income, not only for the widow, but also, through multiplier effects, for the community in which she lives. A South African report noted:

Without pensions, it was apparent that many households and communities would collapse. Pensions are shared by households and communities and are used to invest in the development of household assets, and their utilization. Moreover, pensions are very frequently a primary source of support for grandchildren, with the pensioner [providing childcare] in the absence of the child’s parents. Pensions also help to make old people secure in the family (or enable them to leave households if they so choose). As such, they give the elderly some measure of control over their own lives. (South Africa 1998)

In a few cases, there are even direct entitlements for widows: “The collective welfare fund is for taking care of the ‘five-guarantee’ households, i.e. the aged, the infirm, old widows and widowers, and orphans with five types of help (food, clothing, medical care, housing, and burial expenses), and on allowance for especially poor households, etc.” (China 1997).

Yet the state, in general, does not directly target social safety nets to widows. This leaves widows with the option of accessing community and household level entitlements, as the following Pakistani example demonstrates:

Widows and the elderly have a respected place in Pakistani society and those who are part of a social network are afforded some degree of support and care. In return, they provide help with childcare, domestic tasks and income generating activities. Nevertheless, support is usually extended by people who are themselves deprived, with very little or nothing to spare. Thus current targeting of social safety nets at widows and orphans is appropriate, recognizing as it does differentiated levels of well-being within households. However, [widows and orphans] constitute the primary beneficiary group for virtually all social safety net programs, which leaves large number of the poorest uncatered for. . . . Older women have more status and decision-making power than their daughters and daughters-in-law and this is sometimes a source of intra-household friction. However, older women reported that the intensification of work weighs particularly heavily on them and that they are no longer strong enough to do the work required of them. Despite widows being a locus of most social safety net programs, on the whole the problems of the elderly have not been given high priority by the social sectors and widows are not necessarily among the elderly. (Pakistan 1993)

They return to their parents’ home

Even her father hesitates in welcoming her because she cannot inherit anything from the family. —Tanzania 1997
The extent to which a widow can expect her family to provide support after her husband’s death depends on the culture. In Europe and Central Asia this was mentioned much less than in other parts of the developing world. In Africa, where the family networks otherwise serve as social safety nets, widows are not included in their scope. In Kenya, for example, widows reported that since they would not be welcome in their father’s homes, they often just went to the nearest town, eking a living, often moving in and out of prostitution (Kenya 1996). In Tanzania women said, “It is tragic for women, because when she comes back with nothing, even her father hesitates in welcoming her because she cannot inherit anything from the family. A divorced or separated family will be buried at the church compound, not on her father’s farm. In some areas they bury her at the boundary of the farm, as she has no place in the farm. The farm is for her son” (Tanzania 1997).

**They migrate**

_I have been everywhere, carrying these children with my teeth._ —South Africa 1998

Given the relative unavailability of socially acceptable work for widows living in rural areas, many widows become migrants, heading for urban zones. This makes them potentially more vulnerable; while family networks may extend into urban areas, often they do not. One elderly widow said, “Oh, in those years [after being evicted from a farm] I was tossed around, getting knocks here and there. I have been everywhere, carrying these children with my teeth. I moved towards the coast to a place near Port Alfred. I sought some way of supporting myself by working for some sort of whites in the area, spending a year here, two or so there, and another one elsewhere. I then came back to Manly Flats to work on a chicory farm, but then had to join my daughters in Grahamstown because the children with me found the farm work exhausting” (South Africa 1998).

**They become sex workers**

_After the death of her husband, she tried to make money in different ways, but prostitution was the most cost-effective._ —Widow with two children, Macedonia 1998

In order to generate an income, some widows find work as sex workers. Given the risk of disease and the social stigma attached to the work, this is generally seen as a last resort coping strategy for widows and for poor women. In Cameroon “two main reasons were given for the high rate of prostitution: (a) high unemployment, and (b) retrenchments and massive salary cuts. . . . Commercial sex workers interviewed in Yaounde and Douala confirmed this. In East Province, teenage girls and women out of general employment would say in despair, ‘We have food to sell, but no one will buy [it]. Those that try to buy, pay cheaply for it [so] that it is no longer worth the effort to farm. In the face of this double bind, what else is there left for a woman to sell?’” (Cameroon 1995).
Policy Support

These findings suggest four central policies to improve the lives and livelihoods of widows and their families:

- Enforced property rights
- Employment opportunities
- Improved safety nets
- Information

Enforcing property rights challenges the economic basis for the exclusion of widows. If a widow owns resources, others are more likely to find reasons to support them and work with them. Such social and economic assets also provide a better guarantee against future risks.

Widows find themselves discriminated against in the employment market, and are forced into the informal sector, which pays less and is more insecure. In Bangladesh, one of the most important priorities for all women was the opportunity to work.

Employment opportunities are essential. This means removing discrimination against widows and women more generally in the formal market, and especially improving conditions in the informal sector into which most poor women are thrown. Assistance with self-employment opportunities would be especially valuable, as it would ease their cash flow, give them enhanced social status, provide them with psychological security, help them to send their children to school, and enable them access healthcare. Many women expressed the view that they are not looking for charity, but looking for employment opportunities. This way they will not have to ask or beg for any outside assistance. (Bangladesh 1996)

State- and community-funded safety nets can provide widows with a modicum of security. Baseline security is necessary if widow-headed households are to take the risks necessary for long-term economic improvements. These safety nets should work to ensure that widows have access to the opportunities and freedom necessary to get out of poverty and to redefine their role in society.

Given the persistence of social norms, there need to be interventions at the community level that address some of the social and economic pressures widows face. The need for direct assistance emerges strongly in these reports. Community-based programs that bring widows together in economic and social solidarity can transform their lives.
Conclusions

Poor women and men in many countries feel more socially excluded and less protected than they have in the past. This disintegration of social order is compounded by the fact that for many the old coping mechanisms based on traditional networks are fast disappearing. Poor people speak of a loss of community, which could partially substitute for the lack of assistance from distant state regimes the poor feel powerless to change. Community solidarity has indeed increased in some places as a form of self-protection, but it is unable to confront — much less change — corrupted state institutions that become aligned with criminality and justice and police protection that can be bought and sold. In this type of environment, poor people see few benefits to increased investment in human capital. As children in Mexico (1995) Latvia (1998) and Vietnam (1999) said, moving out of poverty is related to neither schooling nor hard work.

For many vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, those with HIV/AIDS, and in many contexts women, changes over the last decade have eroded important social safety networks and practices. This results in greater exclusion, as the poor struggle to survive. Clearly the way the state is organized often exacerbates existing social tensions and cleavages, leading to greater inequality between the rich and the poor. (See Table 4).
Growth, Inequality, and Poverty

Table 4. Indicators of relative inequality and absolute poverty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>1995-96 GNP per capita growth (avg annual %)</th>
<th>Gini Index</th>
<th>Population below $1 a day (%)</th>
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South Africa 1.0 62.3 23.7  
Tanzania 1.7 38.1  
Thailand 4.4 51.5 3.9  
Togo 4.3  
Tunisia -0.4 40.2  
Uganda 6.2 40.8 69.3  
Ukraine -8.5 25.7  
Venezuela -3.7 53.8 11.8  
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Yemen -7.8  
Zambia 3.4 52.4 84.6  

This table illustrates growth, inequality, and poverty across countries. Growth is measured by average annual 1995-96 growth of GNP per capita, inequality is measured by the Gini index, and poverty indicated by the proportion of people living below $1 a day.

Sources: World Development Indicators 1998, 1999; Deininger-Squire Inequality Database 1999.  
Note: The Gini Index and Population below $1 a day represent currently available data, not necessarily of the same year, and hence may not be comparable across countries.
This figure illustrates the trends in crime, measured by intentional homicides per 100,000, across regions. Latin America and the Caribbean is a stark illustration of high crime levels increasing over time; between 1970 and 1989, this region, with its crime rates among the highest in the world, became even more violent in 1990-94. Sub-Saharan Africa exhibits a decreasing trend from 1975-89, then a sharp subsequent increase. Europe and Central Asia had relatively low crime rates in the early 1970s, started to show a decrease through the mid-1980s, then exhibited a sharp rise in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Asia and the Middle East and North Africa had small changes in crime levels, relative to other regions, through the 1970s and 1980s, and show a decreasing trend in the 1990s.