



Sustainable livelihoods The consultation method

Why consultative research into poverty?

Poor people have the right to participate in shaping their own future, which is intertwined with that of the country. They need space in which to talk about their experience of poverty, to explain their situation and participate in finding solutions to the problems they face.

The nature and causes of poverty differ from one location to another and therefore no single policy or programme will meet all the needs of all the poor – “one-size” does not fit all. Decision-makers should find ways to draw on the knowledge of the poor in order to capture the nature of poverty as it is experienced locally. This enables them to tailor programmes to meet their needs.

When the poor are involved in local level research they can help identify priority issues and suggest ways in which these issues may be effectively addressed. When the poor feel that they are stakeholders in the elaboration of policies and programmes, they are more likely to be committed to making them work in practice.

Where did the consultation take place?

The study involved a process of extended consultation with poor people in seven different locations throughout the kingdom. These locations were selected in order to include a range of livelihood strategies representing diverse poor communities across the

country.

Over 800 community members and a wide range of local and national institutions participated in the consultation process. In general terms the aim was to provide a channel through which the perceptions and understandings of the poor could be heard and their recommendations for improving their lives could be taken into account.

Who did the consultation and how?

Over forty researchers were selected from government, development NGOs, academia, research organisations and from local community based organisations. The researchers (most of whom were already familiar with qualitative participatory research) underwent a five day training programme before going to the field.

The teams worked in pairs and small groups and followed the same methodology in each community.

What research methods were used?

Poverty was investigated using qualitative, participatory methods of research. These approaches use open-ended questions, focus groups, case studies, mapping, visioning and small group discussions. The methods are well known in Jordan to development professionals under the umbrella term “Participatory

National Human Development Report 2004
Launch briefing: Human development progress

The issues investigated in the Consultation process

- Who are the poor: how do people describe different categories of ‘the poor’ what are the attributes of well-being; roughly how many people fall into each category?
- The Social Context: what are the various groups that make up the community, how are they distinguished, which are more vulnerable, who has access to resources, who controls resources?
- The Vulnerability Context: what events, shocks and trends had community members experienced, how did they respond, what help did they have in coping with them?
- Assets and Livelihoods: what assets do people have, which are preferred, do different groups have access to different assets, how are they used to build a livelihood strategy, have there been changes in livelihood sources?
- Policies, Institutions and Processes: what are the most important formal and informal institutions, what services do they provide, how much do they help in times of crisis, how much control do people have over them?
- Rights and Entitlements: what are local understandings of the notion of rights, does everyone have the same rights, do people have the ability and resources to claim their rights and entitlements?
- Actions: what actions do local people and formal and informal institutions need to take to improve their livelihoods

Rapid Appraisal”.

Prof. Robert Chambers, for many the “grandfather” of participatory research, was a key advisor and spent time with the lead researchers in the field.

The PRA approach does not use the traditional questionnaires and random samples of conventional statistical analysis. Nor does it generate and crunch numbers. Participatory, qualitative research processes provides insights into people’s perceptions and understanding. They generate “sound-bite” quotations, case studies, illustrative boxes, rankings and tables. These are featured throughout the report.

How was the report written?

Team leaders identified commonalities and differences in findings, leading to the production of the Summary of Field Research. This

document was circulated widely and a large number of development professionals took part in feedback sessions to comment on the findings, and to provide additional supporting information. The findings “resonate” with the experience of these development professionals: they have a “ground truth” which most readers will recognise.

Although the research took place in only seven locations, each of which has locally specific characteristics of poverty, there are common themes that were raised in all seven locations.

The findings of the research were the starting point for the analysis within the report. Many of the recommendations from the poor are included in chapter four which deals with policies and programmes for poverty alleviation.

Locations for the consultation process

Deeseh

Deeseh is a village of nomadic settlements located in Aqaba Governorate 80 km north east of Aqaba. Most of the 2,500 inhabitants are rural Bedu. The area is classified as semi-arid, although the area benefits from access to underground water sources. The community is relatively isolated from services and markets. The main sources of income are livestock breeding, government or military employment. The community was selected in order to investigate issues of land ownership and agricultural production, and to examine the opportunities for the poor to benefit from tourism initiatives in Wadi Rum.

Dayr al Kahf

Dayr al-Kahf village is located in the northern Badia of Jordan in Mafrq Governorate. The community studied contains around 900 inhabitants, most of whom are Bedu. The area has limited natural resources and rural livelihoods have been constrained by low levels of rainfall and cycles of drought. Dayr al Kahf has also benefited from significant investment through the Badia Research and Development Project. The area was chosen to investigate the trend away from dependence on livestock and to identify the extent to which the poor are able to respond to new livelihood opportunities created through targeted poverty projects.

Sakhra

Sakhra is located in the Ajloun Governorate in the central highlands. The Sakhra community has a population of around 11,700, mainly from one tribe. The area, which benefits from fertile land and relatively high rainfall, produces olives, apples and almonds. The community was selected because it is relatively homogeneous and is located within an area of high poverty.

Dana Village

Dana Village is in a rural area, rich in natural resources, located in the Central Highlands in Tafileh Governorate. Dana Village has become de-populated as people have migrated out of the area in search of better livelihood opportunities. Now only around 120 inhabitants, mainly the elderly and the young, live in 14 households in Dana Village. Most essential services are located in the town of Qadasiyya. The consultation also engaged with nomadic communities in Feynan and with families who had migrated out of Dana to Qadasiyya. The study aimed to

examine the processes of settlement and migration among the poor. The study also investigated the impact of eco-tourism on local livelihoods since the establishment of the Dana Reserve.

Al-Natheef

Al-Natheef is a densely-populated urban area located in the east of Amman, with a total population of around 54,000. The community is heterogeneous, with a high proportion of refugees. The area is relatively poor and households are dependent on a wide range of livelihood strategies in order to survive. The community was selected in order to understand the coping strategies of the poor in urban environments with limited resources, and to investigate the impact of migration on the poor.

South Shooneh

South Shooneh is a rural-based community of around 40,500 inhabitants located in the Jordan Valley in Balqa Governorate. Many of the community are of migrant and refugee origins and depend mainly on agriculture as a source of income. The area is characterised by high levels of unemployment, relatively high poverty and relatively poor access to transportation, health and education facilities. The location was selected in order to understand the impact of the loss of markets on poor households that depend on agriculture for their livelihood strategy.

Madaba

Madaba City is a predominantly urban community, with over 76,000 inhabitants, located in Madaba Governorate. The community has good physical infrastructure and people benefit from relatively good access to education and health facilities. Within the community, however, there are “pockets of poverty”, where poor households live in greater poverty than their neighbours. These households were the focus of the consultation. The study also aimed to investigate the capacity of poor urban communities to cope with the reduction in employment opportunities and to gain the necessary skills to resituate themselves in the emerging labour market.