# Editorial

This second issue of RRA Notes includes three short items, all concerned with research methodology in Africa: from Kenya, Zimbabwe and Tanzania. As with most experience of RRA it is rarely rapid, but these are at least all rural. The focus varies from research into poverty and wealth, to the use of RRA to formulate a village resources management plan, but all three involve departures from conventional methodologies and lessons for other fieldworkers. In particular they involve learning from local inhabitants, although the Tanzania work emphasises the importance of recognising the socio-economic status of particular local inhabitants who may provide information which (unintentionally) misleads the researchers. Some degree of deviousness, or at least ingenuity, is always required.

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# Using Rapid Rural Appraisal to formulate a village resources management plan

## Notes on RRA and a Meeting (4 August 88) of National Environment Secretariat, Mbusyani Women's Groups, and Division Technical Officers

### Charity Kabutha and Richard Ford

- **Background**

Over a period of two weeks (total of 6 working days), a field team of 6 officers from the National Environment Secretariat (NEB) and Clark University as well as 7 technical officers from the division/location level joined with formal and informal leaders from Mbusyani Sublocation, Kakyuni Location, Kangundo Division, Machakos District. The goal of the exercise was to use Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) to formulate a sublocation Village Resource Management Plan (VRMP). While the process is still incomplete, there has been sufficient learning and insights gained to circulate an interim report. A more detailed final paper will be prepared in a few months time when the process is more fully developed.

Mbusyani Sublocation is a large area, approximately 30 km 2 in Machakos District. The population in 1979 was 5,000; estimates for 1988 are about 7,000. People derive their livelihoods mostly from subsistence agriculture and remittances though there are about 20 prosperous farmers who sell coffee as their primary source of income. Rainfall is sparse, averaging between 400 and 600 mm per year; soils are generally rocky; vegetation is scrub grasses, acacia trees, and succulents for much of the sublocation. The area is classified mostly in Kenya's agroecological zones 3 (marginal coffee) and 4 (oil seeds and sorghums) though a small part is zone 2 (coffee). Elevation is 1360 to 1520 metres.

The NES team first visited Mbusyani in May, 1988 as the result of a NES training course sponsored in the nearby sublocation of Katheka. NES has conducted three short visitation seminars at Katheka in the last few months to inform village leaders and extension officers about technologies and management systems to improve productivity of the natural resource base. Mbusyani sent 10 women's group leaders, a senior chief, an assistant chief, and the chair of the Farmer's Cooperative Union to one of these courses to see what aspects of Katheka's natural resources management achievement might be applicable to Mbusyani.

NES followed up with a site visit to Mbusyani and after extended discussions, recommended that an RRA be carried out, the result of which would be a Village Resource Management Plan (VRMP). Mbusyani leaders agreed.

NES modified RRA systems, as described in notes and papers by Conway, Pretty and McCracken. The NES version of RRA, as used in Mbusyani, included:

- Sketch map of entire sublocation - derived from 1:50:000 topographical map and a tour of the area with the Chief;

- Time Line - derived from interviews with 14 elders, meeting in two groups;

- Trend Lines in Food Production, Soil Erosion, Population, and Water Availability - derived from interviews

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with 18 randomly selected residents, meeting in two groups;

- Village Transect - derived from three teams of two people each, one technical officer and one NES officer. Each walked through one of the three micro ecological zones in the sublocation noting vegetation, soils, water, etc.;

- Seasonal Calendar, including rainfall/water availability, crop activity and labour demand, migration, diseases, resource management practices, and food shortages - derived from group interviews with four separate groups;

- Institutional Relationships - derived from interviews with four discussion groups, totalling about 60 people;

- Nine Farm Sketches - derived from individual team members visiting specific farms - 3 each per micro zone; and,

- Sixteen Household Interviews - derived from individual team members meeting heads of households: 5 to 6 interviews per micro zone.

While the NES RRA is under continuing revision, officers are generally satisfied that the above eight exercises provided sufficient data upon which to base discussions to create a VRMP.

- **Creating the VRMP**

Of particular interest is conversion of RRA data into a VRMP. A number of steps are involved and warrant careful consideration as this sequence may be the single greatest contribution of RRA to stimulating improved village resources management.

The NES/Clark team met for a full day following the six days of field data collection. The purpose of the meeting was to prepare for a village discussion (baraza). The team organized the following items on large poster boards:

- a sketch map of the entire sublocation, for display on a wall. The map identified sites of different natural resources in the sublocation (i.e. water) and also noted the boundary lines of micro ecological zones;

- a list of resource management problems, as identified through the RRA and, on the same poster board, a list of possible opportunities (options) to resolve the problems;

- a sketch graph of trends in population, soil, water, and food production, all superimposed on a common axis;

- a seasonal calendar, presented on one chart, with multiple colours representing different agricultural, employment, and land use activities; and,

- a blank matrix noting options (best bets) in the left hand column as well as horizontal column headings of productivity, equity, stability, sustainability, time to benefit, social feasibility, technical feasibility, priority ranking (see Annex A).

The following day the team convened a meeting in the sublocation, which included:

- the six team members from NES

- nine technical officers (some had been only one day with the RRA team):

  Mrs. Rachael Moya, Location Community Development Officer;
  Mr. Mageto, Division Water Engineer;
  Mr. Kinyua, Division Forest Officer;
  Mr. Kioko, Division Forest Assistant;
  Mr. Njoroge, Location Livestock;
  Animal Production Officer;
  Mr. Ondari, Agriculture Officer;
  Mrs. Ndonye, Nurse and Public Health Researcher; and,
  Second public health researcher .

- Assistant Chief Kaku, Mbusyani Sublocation

- Mbusyani Women's Group Committee, consisting of officers of Mwethya Groups (total of eight)

The meeting enabled the varied constituencies to discuss and eventually to formulate a VRMP including: (1) priority activities; (2) institutional responsibilities to do the work; (3) a schedule; (4) needed training for villagers; (5) external inputs, if needed; (6) duties of technical extension officers.

Although the discussions foundered a number of times and the group dealt with only one problem - water - the feeling by the end of the day was indeed positive. The commitment to join together to solve the village's problems was as strong as anyone in Mbusyani could remember; the exchange among technical officers from different ministries had never happened before. Discussions among the Assistant Chief, women's group leaders, and technical officers opened a vista of institutional perspectives and needs not previously considered; all endorsed a series of steps to increase water harvesting and storage that would double the village's water supply. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the discussions was that the recommended activities could be accomplished for very little external cash.

The steps that opened up the discussion emerged from the RRA matrix (Annex A). It enabled the entire group to rank each possible intervention on the basis of eight criteria. Though the definitions were loose and the weighting arbitrary, the matrix worked extremely well to focus discussion, rank options, and enable consensus to emerge. The group narrowed choices to three and appointed a technical advisory group to come up with feasibility studies for each option. A date is set in two weeks time for the technical group to review sites and make recommendations; a second date is set for the full committee to reconvene and make decisions.

As people were leaving the meeting, the Division Water Engineer commented, "Now Mbusyani will have water. Before we knew what technical steps were needed but had no money to hire outsiders and no means to mobilize the village groups. Now the village is ready to help itself and little outside money is needed."

While many problems continue for Mbusyani and much hard work lies ahead, it is clear that RRA has helped the sublocation to identify its problems and reach consensus on what to do about at least some of them.

Discussions are still needed on problems of income generation, lack of tools, marketing, bilharzia, tree planting, and crop diversity. Yet the progress achieved in dealing with the sublocation's number one need has created a climate of trust and cooperation, has instilled an attitude of ownership among the villagers who will do the actual work, and has exacted a public pledge of commitment from the technical officers and Assistant Chief who will be responsible for managing the implementation.

- **Findings about the process of the discussion**

A number of lessons about RRA emerged from the meeting:

- *Gender.* Women in Mbusyani are not accustomed to speaking out in the presence of men. On several occasions the women were clearly holding back, even though they felt strongly about the issue of water. At one point the Assistant Chief said he was embarrassed that the women's leaders were not speaking more directly about their needs. Just before the lunch break, the NES team leader encouraged the women to express their feelings noting that the meeting would be a failure if their views were not heard.

  Lunch provided an informal opportunity for the different elements of the group to talk on relaxed and casual terms. After lunch, discussion picked up considerably - the women had held a short caucus - and some intense exchanges erupted. Women did speak; their priorities were heard; their recommendations accepted. While one meeting will not reform the role of the woman in village decision-making, it has set precedent in Mbusyani that provides confidence for the women's group leaders and an example for other meetings to follow.

- *Language.* The discussions moved quickly from Kikamba (local language) to

Kiswahili (one of two national languages) to English (other national language). Several were fluent in all three; all were not comfortable in a least two. Yet Kiswahili and Kikamba do not lend themselves to abstractions such as "social feasibility" or "sustainability" and they are deficient in technical terminology such as distinguishing among five different types of dams or measuring productivity of different soil management systems.

The NES team needs to develop more visually graphic means to represent the technical and conceptual terms of natural resources management. Villagers, even those with little formal education and limited language skills, have no trouble comprehending the idea of, for example, sustainability. But it must be represented in symbolic form other than or at least in addition to language.

- *Data presentation.* RRA data collected during the previous weeks were indispensable for stimulating discussion. Information about trends in food production and water availability set the stage for discussing water problems. The data, even though only approximations, helped technical officers and village leaders rank their problems from severe to least severe. Having a large map which designated different agricultural zones for the sublocation also helped, especially when considering specific sites as well as issues of equity. Finally, the emphasis on visual presentations such as charts, diagrams, and maps made a difference in stimulating exchange as the diagrams provided common ground that all could understand, regardless of language. NES plans even more emphasis on visual materials in future RRAs.

- *Involvement of extension officers.* Using extension officers in the RRA and VRMP process turned out to be very important. There are several reasons why. First, the extension officers are frequently office-bound because they lack petrol. The RRA data exercise provided the opportunity to meet leaders and examine the resource base in areas where they are assigned to work anyway.

Second, RRA created an arena in which officers from several sectors were able to analyse and discuss common problems. For example, while the sublocation identified water as the greatest problem, the discussions indicted that combined soil control, tree planting, water management, and access control would be needed to resolve it. Such cross-sectoral plans are not normally devised through the traditional operations of extension services.

Third, participation of technical officers in the RRA brought them into the VRMP conversations. During the initial VRMP meeting, the forestry, water, and community development officers were particularly active; livestock and agriculture moderately active. Given interest and backing in the planning stage creates high probabilities that extension officers will be present and supportive during implementation. Further, as in the case of the water engineer, the officers will bring resources from individual ministries such as cement, tools, seedlings, wire, pipe, or hand pumps - all vital ingredients in the sublocation's quest for support.

- *Role of NES or other external agents as catalyst.* No matter how much self-help is present in a rural community, villages cannot make major improvements in resources management simply on their own initiatives. On the other hand, substantial infusions of capital or technology will almost certainly bring adverse impacts. What seems to work best is a slight external nudge or stimulus to make the existing systems work better. The role of RRAs and external agents such as NES, NGOs, or other outside forces is significant to the extent that it can stimulate existing leaders or institutions to perform more effectively.

The extension officers are a case in point. By and large, Kenya's extension staff are well trained in their respective technical specialities. But they lack transport to visit their villages and have little experience or training in mobilizing communities. As a

result, much of their technical expertise falls on deaf ears, not because people are indifferent, but because the institutional setting is not prepared to act on advice given.

Through the motivating influences of external agents, village visitations, RRA analyses, and VRMP planning, the technical officers gain a stronger position and create a stronger community with which to work. Because the extension staff are the single greatest contact between rural communities and outside resources, the RRA increases their effectiveness.

- **Conclusions**

1. Visits to exemplar village such as Katheka turn out to be an all important part of getting an RRA started. They should be included in subsequent RRA exercises.

2. The participation of technical officers in RRA data collection and village-wide discussions is critical. It assures follow-up and backing from those who are in the best position to do it.

3. The participation of both formal (e.g. chief) and informal (e.g. women's group) leaders is equally important. One of the most significant aspects of RRA is the way in which it encourages local leaders, many of whom lack formal education, to express their views.

4. The greatest virtue of RRA is use of visually comprehensible charts and diagrams to stimulate participation and exchange among local leaders, technical officers, and outside elements. The villagers relate to visuals more readily than to written reports.

5. RRA is fast and inexpensive and can be carried out almost totally by individuals in the rural community or assigned to work in that area. Only small (but important) outside help is required from NGOs, donors, central ministries, etc.

6. The process also permits formulation of a VRMP in a relatively short period of time.

The plan serves several purposes: (1) plan for village; (2) clear list of priorities for extension officers to use; (3) systematic and orderly list of needs to be communicated to the District Development Committee and donor/NGO agencies; (4) schedule for village leaders to measure their own progress; (5) assignment of work tasks to specific village institutions.

7. RRA is a splendid vehicle to use natural resources management as a means to integrate soil, water, health, education, population, trees, pasture, etc. at the village level.

8. In order to make RRA happen, a small budget for transport for the team including local residents, extension officers, and outside elements is required. This is one area where donor support is extremely important and helpful.

9. In order to implement a VRMP, a community needs:
   - commitment of labour from village groups (no budget needed);
   - commitment of technical advice from extension officers (no budget needed);
   - small transportation support for technical officers to carry out their work ( small fund of perhaps $200 to $400 needed);
   - approval and backing from DO or other local administrative officer (no budget needed);
   - small budget for inputs such as tools, equipment, or farm supplies, not to exceed $1.00 per person in village per year - in the case of Mbusyani, this would be no more than $7,000 per year;
   - small budget for training of village leaders which would include short visitation or exchanges to nearby villages where institutional or technical elements are already functioning effectively. Training costs are limited almost entirely to local transport to move village trainers, villagers, and a few extension officers. Probably no more than $1,000 per village per year; and,

- commitment from the Assistant Chief, leader of village groups, and other village/community leaders to make the VRMP happen (no budget needed).

The sum total of needs is high on leadership and community support as well as help from extension officers. Almost every village in Kenya is well endowed with these resources. They simply need to be mobilized and trained. While external funds and inputs are required, the need for this help is modest. NES is convinced that the link of village visitation, RRA, and VRMP can significantly improve the way natural resources are managed in Kenyan villages as well as achieve increases in sustainable production.

- **Charity Kabutha** and **Richard Ford,** National Environment Secretariat Interim Report.

# Annex A

| BEST BET oR INNOVATION | PROD. | STAB. | SUST. | EQUIT. | COST | TIME TO BENEFIT | TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY | SOCIAL FEASIBILITY | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | + | ++ | ++ | O | □ | □ | ■ | ◪ | |
| 2. | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. | | | | | | | | | |
| 6. | | | | | | | | | |

KEY :
PROD = PRODUCTIVITY
STAB. = STABILITY
SUST. = SUSTAINABILITY
EQUIT. = EQUITABILITY

– = Negative impact
O = Zero impact
+ = Positive impact
++ = Very positive impact

| | Cost | Time | Feasibility |
|---|---|---|---|
| □ | High | Long | Low |
| ◪ | Med. | Med. | Med. |
| ■ | Low | Short | High |

Note: Row 1 is completed for an imaginary innovation

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# Learning about wealth : an example from Zimbabwe

**Ian Scoones**

## • Introduction

Discovering the patterns of wealth distribution and investigating the dynamics of rural differentiation are notoriously difficult. Many social surveys have attempted this involving laborious longitudinal studies of household income and expenditure patterns. Rarely do such studies investigate rural inequality from the farmers' perspective. It is increasingly realised that, in order to gain insight relevant for development, a study must be geared towards understanding local patterns using the frameworks of understanding used by farmers themselves. The methods used by the extended social survey are expensive in time and person power for both data collection and analysis. Their highly structured format rarely enables the research to enter into the farmer's world.

The recognition of this has led to the current debate on appropriate methodologies for participatory farmer-based research. Rapid Rural Appraisal has become an umbrella heading for such approaches. RRA attempts to assist rapid learning about rural situations through the application of a range of semi- structured research techniques. One of the current limitations of RRA approaches is that it fails to deal effectively with the stratified nature of rural societies. Although RRA ensures many biases are avoided it is often unclear whether a representative range of socio-economic circumstances have been appraised.

## • Wealth ranking

Wealth ranking is a technique that can be used for gaining rapid insight from a local perspective into factors affecting differentiation. It combines in-depth discussion of wealth with a ranking exercise that allows the participating group of local people to assess the relative wealth of households in a preselected list. The technique has a number of potential applications:

- The stratification of a sample according to wealth criteria for further focused appraisals on particular sub-sectors of the population;
- The generation of questions for further research into rural differentiation; and,
- An examination of survey data from a farmer's perspective.

The technique has been developed by Polly Hill in Nigeria and Barbara Grandin in Kenya. A handbook for use by project fieldworkers is soon to be produced by ITDG[1]. This short note reports on the experience of using wealth ranking in the context of a study of household economics and livestock production in southern Zimbabwe.

## • Background

In this instance the aims were firstly to generate insight into the local conception of wealth and secondly, to provide a separate, farmer-based classification of the sample of households that the study was researching with.

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[1] Intermediate Technology Development Group, UK.

A sample of 70 households had been set up a year before on the basis of two criteria that the research intended to investigate. One was an ecological stratification based on whether the household was positioned in one of two ecological zones: the sandy soil savannah in the hilly area or the clay soil savannah in the plains area. The other criterion was based on the ownership of cattle and the sharing relationships involved. Local farmers assisted in the selection of the original sample and, with the help of their local knowledge, a range of wealth categories was incorporated.

In order to investigate the implications of the research data collected and to generate further directed questions it was necessary to have a classification according to wealth. But what is wealth? What criteria should be chosen? These are questions that the research data could not answer. Most researchers arbitrarily choose some factor(s) and use them as the basis for analysing the data. In this case it was decided that the sample itself would make that choice.

## • Methods used

The discussion of wealth was held at three separate meetings. It was decided that views of different sectors of the local population would be sought. In particular it was decided to investigate the contrasting attitudes of men and women. The meetings consisted of 2-3 hours of discussion followed by the ranking exercise. The discussion sessions were attended by about 10 people and the ranking exercise conducted jointly by 4 or 5. Between the group attending each workshop they knew all the households in the sample. One meeting was attended by men from the sample another by women. Participants were involved so as to give a range of ages, residence areas with respect to the ecological zones, apparent wealth and income sources (e.g. remittance income vs. farming) from knowledge of the homes concerned. The third meeting was conducted with the resident research and development team: all local people who had been working with the research in the area.

The discussion of wealth was essentially unstructured. It opened with us posing the simple question: 'what is wealth?' A few key themes had been decided upon in advance and the discussion was guided through each of these. These included comparison of the past with the contemporary situation and contrasting the clay and sandy soil savannah zones. Basically it was left to the group to explore and debate each of the topics as they arose. This they did with great enthusiasm and excitement. It was often a very heated discussion and always highly animated. Notes were taken on the content of the discussion, on general reactions and on quiet asides. Each meeting generated fascinating insight into the local attitudes to and interpretation of differentiation and inequality. Before the close of the discussion each group was asked to highlight particular factors that they viewed as important indicators of wealth in the light of the receding discussion.

## • The discussion: a summary of conclusions

A summary of the historical, ecological and gender comparisons that emerged from the three workshops are presented in outline form below in order to give an impression of the type of issues discussed. The substantive results and detailed discussion of these will be reported elsewhere.

### Historical contrasts

Wealth in the past

- Many cattle, loaning sites, wives and children.
- Wealth dependant on inheritance: the older people were the richest.
- The poor survived through begging, pledging daughters or selling stock to the hurudza (rural agricultural entrepreneurs).

Wealth now

- Good farming; access to money; education; building a fine home.

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- Wealth often through work in town - possible for the young to be wealth.
- The poor are not helped by others. The poor are now visible. They survive in drought because of help from Mugabe and Food for Work.

## Ecological contrasts

### Sandy soil savannah

- Wealth is due to the dambos (valley 'wetlands'). There is food self-sufficiency in drought; even the chance of sales/exchanges of grain.
- Accumulate (e.g. cattle) in drought through grain sales, especially to the clay plains area.
- Labour needed for agriculture high (manuring, guarding against baboons), so less work in town and less education.

### Clay soil savannah

- Wealth is from town; in the past cattle were important, but they now have died from drought.
- Modern houses and educated children are common.

The criteria each group decided upon to define wealth were essentially the same. However, the men and the women emphasised different indicators to different degrees.

## Gender contrasts

### Men

- Good farmer with cattle.
- A well built home and educated children.

### Women

- Money through working in town.
- A fine home, educated children and regular purchases of groceries.

The tenor of their respective discussions was different. Men chose to emphasise productive labour on the land through cropping or livestock rearing, while the women stressed the importance of having access to money for groceries, school fees and all matters associated with childhood welfare. The women thus regarded urban employment as an important route to wealth. The men disagreed, stressing the need to be locally self-sufficient and not reliant on wages and the purchase of food.

- **Ranking**

Following this discussion we were then prepared for the wealth ranking exercise. A set of cards had been produced beforehand, each with the name of a household in the research sample. It is important that no confusion arises over the definition of a particular household and each must be accepted as a unit by those involved in the ranking. In this case there was minimal debate as the research had established a reasonably stable definition of 'household' over the period of research. However, this took some time and there remained disputes over definition. It is important to remember that the household is a variable concept and drawing up a list from official records/censuses may cause problems, especially with the identification of the 'hidden poor'. Official lists therefore need to be complemented by local investigations and the wealth discussion can be a good forum for cross-checking any listings prepared for the ranking exercise.

A subgroup of the main discussion group was then asked to place each of the cards as they were read out in one of four piles (in fact, in four hats on the ground). These represented different wealth groups: 1 to 4. All cards were placed, after consensus had been reached, in one of the four hats. Cards that proved difficult to allocate were left until later. When all the cards had been allocated each pile was reviewed in order to see that the classification had been consistent. The ranking exercise was repeated with each of the discussion groups and an overall ranking based on the sum of each of the groups' scores has been produced.

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As in the main discussion the debate was often intense. It again revealed much about the criteria actually used in viewing patterns of wealth. When a decision had to be made about the allocation of a particular card the participants would argue strongly about the various attributes of that home. In some cases livestock were emphasised; in others children's education; in other the access to remittance income. Always a complex interaction of factors were used to come to the final decision. It will be the next stage of this research to relate the local ranking using a composite set of factors of variable weightings to specific criteria using data from the household survey work.

In addition, the ranking has pointed to other areas for further investigation. Disagreements between members of a ranking group highlighted questions about particular households while different rankings between groups suggested the use of different criteria for particular cases. Of particular interest were the gender differences. For instance, women tended to rank higher those households with a migrant worker who was known to provide generous remittances for the rural home.

## • **Wealth ranking as an RRA tool**

Although this wealth ranking exercise was not carried out in an RRA context, it did serve to give rapid and detailed insight into particular facets of rural wealth differences and local perceptions. What about the applicability of this method in other contexts?

In this case it worked very effectively and fulfilled the objectives set for the exercise. However, the context in which these workshops were carried out must be recalled before drawing too many lessons for replication from this example. The people contributing to the debates and the ranking procedures had been involved in a participatory research process for nearly two years. They were not new to the idea of entering into a research dialogue and vigorously discussing issues in groups or as individuals. The level of involvement of the Mototi community in Mazvihwa has only been achieved

through a long process of research and involvement in the setting-up of small community development projects.

At the beginning of a research or development project, when a wealth ranking may be a good tool for framing further investigations, there is unlikely to be such a level of participation. Although RRA techniques can act as effective tools for encouraging local participation and control over a research project this has to be worked on. Wealth is a sensitive issue and the subject should be approached with caution if wealth ranking is to be used as an initial element of an RRA process. It is perhaps advisable to stick to private discussions and leave group debate for later explorations once the community fully understands the nature of the research and feels involved.

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### FURTHER READING

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### NOTES

The wealth ranking and discussion were carried out in Mazvihwa Communal Area, Zimbabwe in April 1988 with the help of Billy Mukamuri, Mathou Chakavanda, Abraham Mawere and Simbisai Makumbirofa and the 36 people who attended the meetings.

# 3

# Investigating poverty : an example from Tanzania

## Sheila Smith and John Sender

Investigating the dynamics of rural differentiation and class formation were at the forefront of our research in Lushoto District, Tanga Region, Tanzania in 1986. But precisely because of our focus on differentiation and class formation among households, we were careful to devise techniques of reaching households which might be omitted if we relied on local people's answers to questions concerning poverty and wealth.

Initial contacts between outside researchers and local people tend to be with the most articulate, educated, politically influential, etc. but in addition, in Tanzania the prevailing ideology has created a negative attitude towards practices such as labour hiring, which are known to be widespread. So when a wealthy farmer was asked to provide names of people who were regularly employed on his farm, he was very likely to send us to a house inhabited by a relative. The relative was invariably poorer than him, but also invariably employed wage labourers herself/himself, and certainly had never worked as a casual manual agricultural wage worker. The degree of social, and to some extent physical isolation of the poorest people, became obvious as soon as we devised a way of locating them: they had no contact with agricultural extension services, they did not attend meetings, etc.

In fact, one of our assistants, a nurse who was in charge of the MCH Clinic in the area, and had lived and worked in the area for a number of years, was appalled at the level of material deprivation experienced by many of the people we interviewed. She herself had no contact with them, since they were precisely the people who did not attend the clinic. Since the pattern of habitation is very scattered along mountainous ridges, we frequently walked long distances from the road to arrive at the houses of people to interview.

The most effective means of locating the poorest people turned out to be via the primary schools. Since primary education is compulsory from age seven to fourteen, the schools are supposed to have a comprehensive list of school age children. Most children do attend some part of Standard One, but there is a very serious problem of absenteeism. Discussions with Headmasters (sic) and with the District Education Officer indicated that the problem became particularly severe during Standard Three, because of the requirement that parents buy exercise books and pens. Both the opportunity cost of children's labour time and the direct cost of their attending school were considerable: not only did parents have to buy exercise books and pens, but school uniforms were compulsory. The cost of a school uniform was 300 Tanzanian Shillings, approximately 2 weeks' pay for a fulltime estate tea plucker earning the minimum wage.

It was anticipated that the problem of absenteeism would be directly related to the problem of poverty, and that absentee school children and/or their parents were likely to be working as agricultural wage labourers. We chose four primary schools in the area which were regarded as having the worst attendance records, and we examined the attendance registers for Standards Three and Six. Children who were absent from either of these two standards on a total of more than 50 percent of the school days since January 1986 were selected, and a sample of these children's parents were interviewed. As anticipated, a very high proportion (80 per cent) of these children's parents, their siblings or co-residents were employed as casual agricultural wage labourers. (It must be noted that some

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Headmasters tried to subvert this methodology, by sending us to houses of children who were clearly not habitual absentees!).

Other methods of finding the poorest people turned out to be less successful, in particular the attempt to contact the mothers of malnourished children as recorded at the MCH. As noted above, the women who attended the MCH were clearly in receipt of incomes far above the level received by the poorest. Furthermore, those who were working for a daily wage to provide the evening meal could not afford to spend the time walking to the clinic and back, since it would mean not eating that day.

Having located the poorest by following up the parents of absentee schoolchildren, i became clear very quickly what types of possessions people strove to acquire as soon as they could possibly afford them. The poorest people were materially destitute, mobilising all their resources to provide an evening meal. The types of personal possessions and types of houses which distinguished the not-so-poor from the destitute were arrived at by a process of successive approximation, and our questionnaire went through five or six revisions from a checklist to a fully developed questionnaire.

Altogether we interviewed 100 households, and each interview involved detailed information on every resident, and every child and spouse of every resident. As well as interviewing the poorest households, we attempted to interview the richest, but locating the richest and largest landowners is a much easier task than locating the poorest. The analysis of poverty was undertaken on the basis of a Possessions Score, involving information on the following items:

- Metal roof
- Non-mud walls
- Watch
- Light
- Radio
- Bicycle
- Number of pairs of shoes
- Number of rooms
- Number of beds

- Number of mattresses
- Number of chairs
- Number of stools
- Number of coats
- Number of sweaters

The selection was also guided by previous work in the area, particularly by Fleuret (1978). The items clearly constituted major improvements in people's well-being: the climate is frequently cold and wet, so the possession of a roof that does not leak or the ownership of a sweater or a coat or a pair of shoes was regarded as essential, by those who possessed them as well as those who did not.

The Possessions Score was used instead of any measure of income as an indicator of socio-economic status, and it turned out to be very closely correlated with a wide range of other factors: ownership of land, animals: use of purchased inputs; contact with extension services; access to education, health facilities and high-status non-agricultural employment; and political status, as indicated by political positions held by household members.

This has been a very brief glimpse of a much larger piece of work. The research has been written up as a book, and will be published by Routledge in mid-1989 as Economic Development in Rural Tanzania: Poverty, Class and Gender in the Usambaras. In addition three papers have been submitted to journals, details forthcoming in later editions of RRA Notes when publication dates etc. are known.

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REFERENCE

Fleuret, P. 1978. Farm and Market: A Study of Society and Agriculture in Tanzania. PhD Thesis, University of California, Santa Barbara.