

**TANZANIA**  
**PARTICIPATORY POVERTY ASSESSMENT PROCESS**  
**(2002/2003 Cycle)**

**Internal Evaluation of Activities**  
**January – July 2002**

October 2002

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## ACRONYMS

PPA	-	Participatory Poverty Assessment
ESRF	-	Economic and Social Research Foundation
Tz	-	Tanzania
IC	-	Implementing Consortium
VIP	-	Very Important Person(s)
DB/RP	-	District Based Research Partner
CBOs	-	Community-Based Organizations
NGOs	-	Non-Governmental Organization
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
RIPs	-	Rural Integrated Programmes
IDS	-	Institute of Development Studies
UNICEF	-	United Nations Children's Fund
HIV/AIDS	-	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus/Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome
PRA	-	Participatory Rural Appraisal/Assessment
PO-RALG	-	President's Office – Regional Administration and Local Governments
DPLO	-	District Planning Officer
DED	-	District Executive Director
DC	-	District Commissioner
DAS	-	District Administrative Secretary
VEO	-	Village Executive Officer
WEO	-	Ward Executive Officer
PRSP	-	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
TORs	-	Terms of Reference
AMREF	-	Africa Medical Research Foundation

The contents of this Evaluation are based on the results of a one-month consultancy by Mr. Patrick Ngowi. As such, it does not represent the official views of the Economic and Social Research Foundation or the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania.

## SECTION ONE

### 1.0 RATIONALE AND TOR FOR THE TzPPA INTERNAL EVALUATION (JANUARY – JULY 2002)

#### **Rationale**

The Tanzania Participatory Poverty Assessment (TzPPA) process is an integral part of Government's Poverty Monitoring System. As determined by Government and Civil Society stakeholders, the PPA's goals are to:

- Enhance, through in-depth description and analysis, research participants' and policymakers' understanding of key poverty issues
- Explore the (a.) different and sometimes competing priority needs of poor people, (b.) likely impact of policies and (c.) tradeoffs and potential compromises between diverse interests in order to develop 'best bet' recommendations for poverty alleviation
- Facilitate the constructive engagement of civil society in pro-poor policymaking processes

The 1<sup>st</sup> PPA Cycle began in January 2002 and will run through December 2003. To-date, three milestones have been reached, namely the planning of fieldwork activities, the implementation of fieldwork and two "synthesis and analysis" workshops. The National PPA Report and several Topical Briefing Papers are currently being prepared under the guidance of ESRF, the Lead Partner in the TzPPA Implementing Consortium.

Initial activities have generated a great many lessons learnt to inform and improve the design and implementation of future cycles of the TzPPA. This evaluation was initiated by the PPA Management Team in order to: (1.) capture these lessons while they are still "fresh" in researchers' minds and (2.) develop practical recommendations for improving future performance.

## **1.1 Tanzania Participatory Poverty Assessment Process (2002/3) TOR to research and write the “Synthesis of Fieldwork Experience”**

### **1.1.1 Background**

The 2002/3 Tz PPA is about to embark on its next important stage, which will involve writing the PPA National Report on people’s differential vulnerability to impoverishment and conducting pro-poor advocacy activities. This follows more than four months of participatory research conducted throughout Tanzania.

The writing-up stage will involve synthesizing and analyzing fieldwork findings and developing concrete policy recommendations. It will also entail gathering information from secondary sources and exchanging ideas with Implementing Partners, external specialists and data users/policy-makers. Advocacy activities will aim towards the incorporation of PPA findings in key policy papers and processes in order to yield increasingly effective pro-poor policies.

### **1.1.2 Rationale**

The evaluation and documentation of the PPA (2002/3) field experiences will allow future process to draw on the lessons learnt in terms of methodologies, strategies and the whole organization of such kind of work.

### **1.1.3 Responsibilities of the Contractee**

- Working with ESRF Technical Advisor and Assistant Technical Advisor to design a highly useful document synthesizing and summarizing fieldwork experiences;
- Bringing together information from Team Synopses;
- Conducting interviews with Implementing Partners, trainers and others to develop a comprehensive understanding of what worked well, and what did not, during the preparatory period and fieldwork;
- Providing critical analysis of the causes/consequences of both good and bad experiences;
- Identifying patterns in the experiences of different Research Teams;
- Putting forward practical recommendations that reflect balance between costs and benefits; and
- Submitting a final paper (electronic copy and one hard copy) to ESRF by 6<sup>th</sup> September.

### **1.1.4 Location**

The Contractee will be based at ESRF offices in Dar es Salaam. Out of station duties may be as the need arises.

### **1.1.5 Duration**

This contract will be for the period beginning from 5<sup>th</sup> August to 6<sup>th</sup> September 2002.

## SECTION TWO

### 2.0 METHODOLOGY

This Report examines the preparatory and fieldwork stages (January – July 2002) of the first TzPPA Cycle. It employed different methods to collect information. The combination resulted in a participatory process that reflects the opinions and insights of many people within and beyond the PPA Implementing Consortium.

The Evaluation began with a meeting in which Team Leaders identified elements of the PPA to document and assess. Each Leader then wrote an Evaluation Report based on their Team's experiences. These Reports were written with input from Research Partners.

This Synthesis Report brings together and further analyses those generated by the individual Research Teams. It has also been enriched by additional interviews (see Appendix 1 for details) and extensive commentary provided by the PPA Management Team. As such, it is a significant contribution to documenting, as well as evaluating, activities and processes to date.

The Evaluation, as a whole, has looked at the six major elements of PPA activities to date. These are:

- (i) ***Preparatory process*** (encompassing training, policy week, planning week, design group meeting, introductory video)
- (ii) ***District partnership*** (addressing District-based Research Partners, local policy responses, support/commitment/intention, site selection, planning conflict with PPA process...)
- (iii) ***Village partnership*** (encompassing introductory process, community meetings, community mobilisers, support/commitment, responses to local issues, feedback sessions, remuneration, participation at district level feedback, party politics).
- (iv) ***Research at Field Level*** (looking at the duration of activities, urban/rural sites, logistics, implementation of methodology, capturing diversities, challenges surrounding research agenda, writing activity plans/reports, village reports/documentation, team dynamics, VIP visits, administration).
- (v) ***1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Synthesis and Analysis Workshops***
- (vi) ***Capacity Building Amongst Researchers*** (self career development, partners' work, commitment/researching for poverty eradication, interns, DB/RP)



## SECTION THREE

### 3.0 KEY LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 3.1 General Perception of the TzPPA

From its beginning, the TzPPA has been an intensely participatory exercise developed through collaboration between Civil Society and Central and Local Government. As a result, many stakeholders have expressed commitment, enthusiasm and high expectations for the process. Such high expectations are never easy to meet.

**With regard to the PPA's formation:** Because of its highly participatory and inclusive values and vocabulary, some stakeholders felt disappointed that the PPA's Implementing Consortium did not include CBOs, private sector organizations, members of the cooperative movement or non-Christian faith-based NGOs. Indeed, their omission seemed hypocritical. However, these organizations had not been forgotten about or neglected. Before the current Implementing Consortium was formed, key stakeholders decided that:

- CBOs are "community based." Therefore, they would not be appropriate *Implementing Partners* in a PPA working at the national level. This is, of course, not to say that CBOs should not be involved in the PPA. Indeed, they should be and have been. Rather, it is to say that CBOs are most strategically engaged in other ways.
- The private sector is oriented towards profit-making activities, as opposed to pro-poor policy research and advocacy. Therefore, while private sector organizations may be invited to help inform the PPA's design and comment on its outputs, they would not be feasible *Implementing Partners*.
- Economic reforms in Tanzania have shaken the trade union and cooperative movements. To date, their organizations have yet to clearly define new niches in poverty reduction efforts. Therefore, it is not yet time to engage them in the PPA as *Implementing Partners*.
- A range of faith-based NGOs, indicative of Tanzania's religious plurality, should be invited to join the PPA IC. However, after discussions with several institutions about the purpose of the PPA, only the Christian Social Services Commission applied to join the 2002/3 Cycle. Of course, new relationships to the PPA remain welcome; and the IC is open to any organization proposing how they might cooperate with it in pursuit of common goals.

**With regard to communities:** Research Teams worked very hard to communicate the PPA's nature and role in improving people's lives. Nonetheless (and especially early on in the research process), some local people expected it to provide immediate solutions to their many problems.

**With regards to Local Government/Authorities:** Though Research Teams were always well received, some community, district and regional officials questioned the PPA's added value to understanding poverty and its causes. For example, one senior regional official was very cynical about such research, saying that poverty and its causes are already well known. In his opinion, resources allocated to the PPA – or any other research – would have been better spent on direct activities (e.g. building wells or schools) for poverty reduction. Other officials worried that the PPA might

generate good information but still be a waste of scant resources since *connections between research and action are rare*. This confirms why the PPA's overarching goal is not to 'write reports' but to 'facilitate and encourage pro-poor policymaking.' Unfortunately, it remains unclear whether or not the PPA will be able to play this role at the local level where its research actually took place.

The process of coordinating this huge project, which is engaging stakeholders from different backgrounds, was not an easy task. This role was assigned to one member of the IC. As one Implementing Partner pointed out, "*it is a new process in the Tanzanian policy landscape, with a fog of landmarks, but we entrusted the Management Team to see it happen.*"

## 3.2 PREPARATORY PROCESS

The PPA preparatory process included five main activities, namely:

- (i) Design Group Meeting
- (ii) Policy Week
- (iii) Research Agenda Workshop
- (iv) Site Selection Workshop
- (v) Training in Bagamoyo
- (vi) Planning Week and Logistical Preparations.
- (vii) Production of an Introductory Video

These processes had enormous impact in terms of shaping the research itself (including its objectives), developing skills to conduct participatory research and preparing teams for challenges they might encounter in the field.

The following are key lessons learnt from the Preparatory Phase:

### 3.2.1 Design Group Meeting

The Design Group Meeting, held in late-January 2002, was a vital step in planning the PPA in a participatory way. To a great extent, it set the *tone* for relationships in the Implementing Consortium. Indeed, it helped Partners feel “ownership” of the process from the start. The strategy to include people involved in previous PPAs (Shinyanga) and with technical experience/expertise in other forms of participatory research (UNDP, RIPS-Mtwara) proved worthwhile. This practice is commendable and should be maintained throughout this and future Cycles of the TzPPA.

### 3.2.2 Policy Week

The “Policy Week” was intended to help Implementing Partners develop greater knowledge and understanding of policies and policymaking processes surrounding the PPA’s research agenda. Research Partners were required to attend and additional staff from institutions co-implementing the PPA were welcome. The majority of researchers considered the four-day long event a real “eye opener”. Even those who were relatively well versed in policy issues thought it a worthwhile opportunity to improve their knowledge. Perhaps more importantly, by week’s end, researchers had begun *talking in terms of policies*. This helped focus subsequent training in participatory research (soon after held in Bagamoyo). Despite these successes, attendees noted the following:

- Presentations made by Government representatives dealt more with policymaking *processes* (in particular, extolling how “participatory” they had been) than policy *content* and/or implications for poverty reduction. In other words, there was little appraisal of what the policies said or did. Perhaps this can be attributed to the short time allotted to each presentation. Therefore, in future it might be best to: (a.) allocate more time to this exercise (at least one whole week); (b.) assign discussants to the presentations (this would have stimulated workshop participants to be more attentive); and (c.) do more group works and plenary discussion to encourage critical thinking/learning. Of course, all these alternatives are time-consuming and costly. However, it is possible that their benefits would more than compensate.

- To the degree that presentations inadequately covered policy content, they failed to provide researchers with sufficient information to ask probing questions while in the field or directly address policy issues in their reports.
- Many participants were already familiar with the information that *was* presented. In the future, similar activities should identify and build upon people's knowledge base.
- Venue for the policy week was another subject of concern. It was just a few kilometres from the city centre, and this attracted truancy among participants and presenters engaged in other activities. In future, it may be better to hold such events outside of Dar es Salaam.

### 3.2.3 Selection of research districts

The Site Selection Workshop was conducted on 5<sup>th</sup> February with the participation of 45 stakeholders from within and beyond the IC. It was a challenging Workshop due to its combination of substantial goals and short time-span, as well as participants' (a.) lack of immediate access to meteorological data and (b.) unavoidably incomplete knowledge about complex social, economic and ecological conditions throughout the country. Nonetheless, by drawing on the cumulative experiences and knowledge of all participants, a set of robust site selection criteria were chosen.

It was also possible, within the context of this Workshop, to identify appropriate districts to match sets of site-selection criteria for urban-based, fishing and livestock-keeping livelihoods. Follow-up interviews were conducted with specialists in Government and academic institutions to triangulate the recommendations made by Workshop participants. In all cases, it was agreed that *the chosen sets of site selection criteria captured the most significant poverty-related variables of diversity in Tanzania*. This crosschecking was a worthwhile step to include in the site selection process. Indeed, it improved overall reliability and identified a better site in which to study one set of urban-based criteria.

Because participants in the first Workshop lacked immediate access to meteorological data and were not familiar with farming conditions across the country, a follow-up Workshop was conducted to identify the best sites in which to study vulnerability and agriculture-based livelihoods. This Workshop brought together experts from the IC, Civil Society, Government and the World Food Programme. Together, they reviewed meteorological maps and mined their group-knowledge to identify districts in which communities exhibiting agriculture-based site-selection criteria could be found.

On the whole, this process was well designed. Indeed, in light of what they learnt in the field, researchers felt the selection criteria were good and that they had been steered to the right districts. Nonetheless, several minor problems did crop up. For example, one Research Team was directed to a district (Mwanza Rural) that no longer existed in name and one district (Mafia) proved inaccessible within the confines of the PPA's research schedule.

### 3.2.4 Training in Bagamoyo

The PPA Training Programme in Bagamoyo was a critical step in the preparatory process. Its design began with a questionnaire survey sent to Research Partners. In

principle, this was intended as a means to create a tailor-made training package acknowledging researchers' previous experience and addressing their specific needs.

The Training Programme was very successful in articulating the philosophy and roles of PPAs and PRA. The facilitators from Uganda, the Institute of Development Studies (UDSM) and the PPA Management Team were able, through their different backgrounds, to fill some gaps in each others' knowledge. This approach worked well and should be maintained in the future.

Unlike the Policy Week, this Programme took place away from Dar es Salaam. This intense, focused atmosphere helped participants to (a.) concentrate on the work and (b.) build team spirit. These strengths notwithstanding, there have been some mixed opinions by participants and trainers regarding the Programme's quality and output.

Of course, learning to use participatory research is inevitably difficult and cannot be adequately done in the context of a two week Training Programme. Regardless of the reason(s), the net outcome was that interns and other new researchers did not develop a strong grasp of participatory methods. This was the result of unclear 'classroom' training and insufficient practice in a 'field' setting. Obviously, both of these issues need to be addressed in future. Most importantly, more time is needed with training support in a 'field' setting. The days that trainees worked in communities near Bagamoyo were not enough for them to develop their skills to an acceptable level/trainers to provide adequate instruction. In future, alternatives need to be explored that satisfy training needs *and* ethical concerns about the exploitation of communities as training grounds.

Some participants suggested that these shortcomings were due to poor preparation by core facilitators. Others felt that the problem was more likely due to their lack of expertise/proficiency in participatory policy research. The following (partial) explanations have also been put forward:

- Absence of the Ugandan co-facilitator during most of the consultancy's prep period
- Failure to access training manuals from previous PPAs (particularly, the Shinyanga PPA)

The selection of core facilitators prioritised (a.) building the capacity of local training institutions and (b.) regional collaboration. While these goals may be worthwhile, some participants in the Training Programme felt that it would have been wiser vis-à-vis the PPA's main goals to recruit more experienced, free-lance consultants (e.g. someone connected with the 1995 or 1997 PPAs).

### **3.2.5 Planning Week and logistical preparation**

The Planning Week took place from 18<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2002. It was very useful in that it (a.) identified the range of issues that would arise in the field and (b.) involved researchers themselves in thinking about how these should be handled. This participatory approach proved very helpful when in the field since researchers could point to the *Procedures Manual* they produced and say, 'this is what we agreed to do.' These procedures were developed with critical input on how to study particularly difficult topics (e.g. social exclusion and HIV/AIDS) and work with special social

groups (e.g. the elderly and children) from HelpAge International, UNICEF, Save the Children, CARE and IDS-UDSM.

The major output of the Planning Week was a *Procedures Manual* setting forth mutually agreed upon steps and rules in the research process. This document proved to be an invaluable reference guide. The *Manual's* quality was tested in the field and found excellent. Also, researchers felt a great degree of ownership over it due to the manner in which it was created. This was a wonderful practice that nurtures the very concept of participation within the PPA itself.

The *Manual* usefully served two purposes. First, it contained clear information and administrative guidelines (including format, content and reporting deadlines), as well as instructions stipulating which Local Authorities to contact, how to interact with communities, how to address tough research situations, how to make team decisions, how to manage funds, what to do in case of accidents, etc. Without exception, all sections in the Manual should be maintained and provided to future Research Teams.

Second, the *Manual* helped, to a large extent, ease tensions between Team Members by providing a commonly agreed upon "Social Contract" that could be referred back to. Unfortunately, in a few cases, Team Members tried to exploit the consultative and consensus-based decision-making principles described in the *Procedure Manual*. This was problematic until the PPA Management Team issued a statement about the overarching authority of Team Leaders.

The composition of Research Teams was also announced during the Planning Week. Though some researchers would have preferred knowing earlier who they would be working with, the PPA Management Team needed time to assess (a.) who had complementary skills, (b.) who got along well, on a personal level, with each other and (c.) individual preferences for focusing on one livelihood versus another. These very important matters had to be measured against the need for ensuring age and gender representivity between Teams.

Fortunately, once the composition of Research Teams was announced, people adjusted to group dynamics and learnt how to work well with each other.

Each Team was composed of a Team Leader, Research Partners, a Research Intern and a District-based Research Partner. In the spirit of team building, all members had equal 'rights and responsibility' vis-à-vis the research process. The Team Leaders had the extra task of ensuring quality control and managing logistics. The Social Contract played an important role in setting a balance in the work done by Team Members regardless of position in the PPA. In short, the size of Teams was manageable (not too big and not too small) to get the job done.

The inclusion of Research Interns was an admirable practice, giving them the opportunity to gain real experience under the watchful eye of others who could provide sustained support/guidance in a field environment. Including Research Interns in the PPA's design can play an important role in building a cadre of national

professionals capable of conducting high quality policy-oriented participatory research.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.2.6 Introductory video

The idea behind the Introductory Video was excellent. In practical terms, it proved to (a.) be a very effective entry strategy into the community and (b.) prepare community members for the research process. Nonetheless, there were two problems:

- The video had a ‘rural bias’ in that it did not include town scenes. This was off putting to urban-dwellers and should be rectified in the future.
- Some of the Introductory Video recordings sent to Teams were of poor quality and had to be replaced.

In addition to showing the Introductory Video, Teams showed other educational videos in the evening. This frequently made the places where they were staying a focus point for village socializing. Community members were aware that these videos were being shown ‘for them,’ not ‘for the Team;’ and people appreciated the gesture. On the other hand, it made some Team camps too noisy to work in at night. In some of these cases, the Team had to temporarily abandon their camp to work in a classroom or other nearby facility.

The greatest disappointment with the videos was the poor quality of some equipment provided by the Management Team. The televisions, in particular, were extremely unreliable. At times, they failed to produce sound and four out of the five televisions eventually failed altogether. Several of the televisions only lasted for about five minutes before blowing the first time. In future, it will be wise to consider how best to deliver good information using quality medium.

### 3.2.7 Recommendations from the Preparatory Stage

This Evaluation offers the following recommendations for implementing future PPA Cycles:

- The spirit of *inclusion* and *commitment* that shaped the Preparatory Stage should be maintained
- Closer watch needs to be kept over consultants to ensure that they will provide the agreed upon output, in the agreed upon manner at the agreed time. It may be advisable to insist that consultants work/use their prep time while at ESRF.
- The Procedure Manual should clearly stipulate the authority of the Team Leader and responsibilities of other Team Members.

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<sup>1</sup> As indicated in 3.8.2 below, this experience has helped some of them secure employment both within the PPA project and outside.

### 3.3 DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP

The success of the TzPPA depends on working well with Local Authorities at Regional, District and Village levels. The involvement of District officials was key to: (a.) identifying and making contact with communities in which to conduct research, (b.) assigning a “District-based Research Partner” (DB/RP) to stay and work there with the rest of the Research Team (c.) translating research results into local action.

In general, the TzPPA successfully partnered with District authorities. This led to mutual benefit in terms of: (a.) enriching the Research Team with local knowledge, (b.) capacity building at the district level, (c.) helping communities to see the seriousness with which Government – at all levels – is taking the TzPPA, (d.) providing valuable information for local action.

#### 3.3.1 District-based Research Partners (DB/RPs)

District-based Research Partners were key to: (a.) facilitating the identification of research sites, (b.) organizing Introductory and Feedback meetings at the district level, (c.) contacting research sites prior to the arrival of Research Teams and (d.) participating in actual research activities. DB/RPs were also vital to ensuring that research results have a chance to inform local level planning and policymaking.

**Training:** Despite the *value* of their contributions, few DB/RPs had the background to work on the PPA without close supervision by other Team Members. Thus, given the seriousness of their responsibilities, it would have been helpful if DB/RPs had received orientation and training in Dar es Salaam and Bagamoyo alongside other researchers.

In other words, their presence on the Team aided the research process and contributed to building local capacity. However, their contribution – and their reward (in terms of experience gained) – would have been much greater if they had been given more systematic instruction, etc. Unfortunately, it remains unclear as to whether or not providing this training would be feasible and/or appropriate for the TzPPA.

The possibility was considered in designing the 2002/3 TzPPA Cycle. The major reasons for deciding *against* including DB/RPs in the introduction and training programme were:

- > Logistical
- > Financial
- > Practical

First, it would have been logistically difficult (and probably impossible) to get DB/RPs from their home districts to Dar es Salaam between the end of the site selection process and the beginning of the 2002 Training Programme. Doing so in the future could easily take a month or more of planning, particularly if PO-RALG continues to recommend that DB/RPs be the District Planning Officer (DPLO). Also, it was often difficult for DPLOs to leave their HQ for a week and a half to work in a local research site. Withdrawing them from their ordinary assignments for more than



a month of travel, orientation, training and research may put an unreasonable strain on already overburdened Local Authorities.<sup>2</sup>

Second, the financial cost of bringing thirty DB/RPs to Dar es Salaam does not seem worthwhile *if* it is only for a week's briefing about the TzPPA and its methods. However, the more training is provided, the more costly. Given that DB/RPs would only use these skills for a week and a half of fieldwork, the costs may be difficult to justify.

Third, these costs would be particularly difficult to justify since (a.) the DB/RP would not be part of a Research Team for long enough to develop strong participatory research skills and (b.) their training by the PPA would not be part of a sustained, institutionalised effort to build capacity at the district level. As a result, any investment in capacity building would be very costly and have little chance of taking 'firm root' outside the context of a mainstream initiative like the Local Government Reform Programme.

Obviously, this is a very complex issue. It should be revisited – in light of changing mandates, opportunities, etc. – by stakeholders involved in designing future Cycles of the TzPPA.

**District Planning Officers:** Some DPLOs were acting District Executive Directors or on official missions outside the district. As a result, junior staff from Planning and other Departments (e.g. Community Development, Fisheries or Agriculture) were sometimes assigned to accompany Research Teams. In several instances, these officials worked very well at the village level. Nonetheless, their junior status mitigated against taking a firm position in district meetings on sensitive issues raised by communities. This effectively limited their contribution to local decision-making processes.

Though competing demands on their time make it difficult for DPLOs to join Research Teams, prioritising their direct involvement in the PPA still seems advisable. Indeed, as department heads and senior members of District Management Teams, they are particularly well placed to raise awareness of, and galvanize action in response to, issues they see in the field.

### **3.3.2 District feedback sessions and local policy responses/follow-up**

The incorporation of District Feedback Sessions into the PPA design proved to be a worthwhile investment of time and other resources. Indeed, it greatly enhanced District Authorities' feeling of co-ownership over the PPA. It was particularly encouraging to be told, as one Team was, that 'you are among the first externally-based researchers to give us formal feedback on what is happening in our district.' District Feedback Sessions also provided very useful forums in which officials could learn about research results and either challenge them or their own, previous, ways of thinking. As such, these Sessions were an important means of (a.) triangulating research results and (b.) contributing to local policymaking/planning processes.

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<sup>2</sup> Given that several DPLOs were not available to work with Research Teams, there is evident risk that a DPLO could receive training and then be unable to engage in fieldwork due to overriding responsibilities at the district level.

These Sessions were enhanced by the presence of NGOs, CBOs and representatives from the research sites. In the most effective Feedback Sessions, the DED, DC, DAS and Council Chairperson were present. On the whole, this mix allowed for constructive engagement and lively debate. Community representatives, in particular, were often emboldened by this environment to confront District Authorities on sensitive subjects (such as concrete cases of corruption). Regardless, the presence of people from research sites improved the PPA's credibility and perceived legitimacy in the eyes of Local Authorities.

Some of the best examples of positive change put in motion by the PPA are in Ilala District, Dar es Salaam Region. Mr. Renuus Kihongo, the Ilala Municipal Council Economic Planner, joined the Urban-based Livelihoods Team from 4<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> March. Following his involvement in the PPA, Mr. Kihongo returned to his office and followed the President's Office, Regional Administration and Local Government's instructions to explore how results from the PPA could be translated into immediate action at the municipal/district level.

Shortly thereafter, Mr. Kihongo's ideas were presented to the Municipal Management Team; where it was decided that the way forward should be determined together with community members. Accordingly, six municipal staff were assigned to work with six community representatives – none of whom could be from local government. To date, this has culminated in the following:

- Provision, at Amana Hospital, of counseling services to drug-users seeking to break their addiction
- Provision, as of June 2002, of counseling services to drug-users at Mnazimmoja Health Center<sup>3</sup>
- Provision, beginning in 2003, of counseling and other forms of targeted assistance (such as training in alternative employment and soft loans) to Commercial Sex Workers
- Formulation of new sensitization strategies encouraging the equal provision of schooling opportunities to girl and boy children. These strategies, unlike those in the past, begin from an understanding of local ideas about gender and education.
- The creation *by community members* of transparent criteria for priority support from “good Samaritans” to especially poor local households. The criteria to select these households are: (1.) affected by long-term illness, (2.) female-headed, (3.) four or more children (4.) faced with frequent hunger. So far, ten households meeting these conditions have been identified and provided with regular assistance.

Some Feedback Sessions were less successful. Officials in one district regarded the PPA as a “witch-hunt” designed by central Government to catch cases of mismanagement, corruption, etc. This mood limited Local Authorities' capacity to constructively listen to and engage with others during the Feedback Session. Instead, officials chose to focus only on information about their line department and, even

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<sup>3</sup> Government's IADC-Interministerial Anti-Drug Commission is primarily pursuing a “supply-side approach” emphasizing indictment and punishment of drug-sellers/users. In contrast, the Ilala Municipal Council has (in the wake of Mr. Kihongo's PPA experience) adopted a demand-side approach that prioritizes helping drug-users become addiction free. According to Mr. Kihongo, this reflects the Municipal Director's conclusion that, “These are our people. We need to help them, not punish them.”

then, just on statements that could be interpreted as criticising performance. In other instances, the value of Feedback Sessions was undermined by the poor attendance of Local Authorities (including senior district officials and councillors) who refused to attend without being given “sitting fees” – this despite the fact that meetings were called by the DED and, often, held in district HQs.

Clearly, the attitude of Local Authorities to the PPA and their own work shaped the outcome of Feedback Session. Fortunately, as they gained experience, Research Teams became better at “PR” (Public Relations or, in this case, “Government Relations”) and presenting the notion of Feedback Sessions as a professional courtesy intended to benefit local actors. This improved, but did not completely overcome, occasional opposition in/to Feedback Sessions.

### **3.3.3 District level support, commitment and intention**

Almost all districts visited by Research Teams demonstrated great interest in, support and commitment to the PPA and its research agenda. The most visible sign of this support was the allocation of a very busy, senior staff member (often the Planning Officer) to the post of “District-based Research Partner.”

Some districts did not prioritise involving senior staff in the PPA due to a combination of (a.) competing internal demands, (b.) inadequate time to reassign staff responsibilities and (c.) insufficient understanding of the PPA’s purpose. Following the “Introductory Briefing” for district officials, several told Research Teams that it would have been possible to send the Planning Officer if they had known about the PPA earlier and/or in greater detail. Instead, junior staff members were assigned as DB/RPs. This led to mixed results. Some junior staff were particularly capable field workers, while others were strikingly inexperienced. Regardless, they were ill positioned to speak out forcibly in Feedback Sessions or ensure follow-up action on the basis of research results.

It seems that conflicting demands for the priority attention of District Authorities is occasionally inevitable since (a.) many HQs are chronically understaffed (with Planning Officers sometimes acting as DED) and (b.) districts have their own scheduled activities that can clash with those of the PPA.

Several options could be pursued to give greater advance warning about the PPA to District Authorities, such as:

- Calling well in advance and providing a “Phone Briefing,” complete with a discussion of PPA objectives, timeframe, expectations, etc. and *then* sending project documents
- Using IP field staff, when possible, to make direct contact with District Authorities. This was done, with very positive results, in both Kigoma and Lindi<sup>4</sup>
- Sending a Research Team member ahead of the others on a “ground-clearing mission.” Of course, even though this was helpful when done by one Team for

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<sup>4</sup> ActionAid, CARE International and Concern Worldwide provided support for teams conducting research in districts where they maintain operational offices. This backstopping proved very helpful.

one site, costs and benefits would have to be weighed since this option would be very expensive and time consuming.

Regardless of the modality, it is extremely important that future activities give District Authorities as much prior notice as possible of intended activities.

### **3.3.4 Community site selection process**

The capacity of District Authorities to identify appropriate communities for research was undermined by a lack of understanding about the complex thinking behind the PPA Site Selection Process.

Some local officials saw the ‘big picture’ and grasped the role of detailed site selection criteria provided by the PPA Management Team. Others did not. In these latter instances, officials effectively ignored site selection criteria and instead tried steering researchers towards either the very poorest or very best off communities in their domain. This choice typically reflected political concerns to demonstrate (a.) a glaring need for external assistance or (b.) that people prosper under the current district administration.

The representative spread of sites sought by the PPA was particularly confusing for some officials because previous research on poverty has often prioritised studying the very poorest communities in Tanzania. Of course, part of the solution to ensuring the selection of complementary sites is to improve verbal communication with District Authorities. The following options might also help:

- Mainstreaming the involvement of DB/RPs in the research process
- Ensuring that Research Teams directly participate in the site selection process (rather than leaving it to District Management Teams)
- Being aware of politically motivated pushes towards poorest or best off communities
- Asking District Management Teams to pre-select three sites and make the final choice together with PPA Research Teams

Any combination of these or other options may be appropriate (given future resource constraints, etc.). The important point is that sites must be selected on the basis of their specific criteria. Otherwise, the reliability of the entire PPA sampling frame is threatened.

### **3.3.5 Potential partnerships in districts**

During fieldwork, Research Teams worked with a number of locally active NGOs and a few CBOs focusing on community development, education, environment, health, gender promotion, HIV/AIDS, religion and people with disabilities.

Collaboration existed in the form of (a.) logistical support/backstopping, and information given to the PPA and (b.) information flow from the PPA to NGOs & CBOs. According to a number of CBOs, the most significant ‘payback’ from the PPA was an invitation to District Feedback Sessions. These Sessions were, purportedly, an extremely rare and valuable forum for serious dialogue between District Authorities and Civil Society.

The PPA should consider:

- How to make these Feedback Sessions still more useful as fora for dialogue between Government and Civil Society
- How these fora might be institutionalised
- How, within the very limited mandate of the PPA, to contribute towards building the capacity of CBOs to engage in local policymaking and planning processes

### **3.3.6 Recommendations**

The following conclusions are drawn from this section:

- The incorporation of District-based Research Partner should be maintained in the PPA design
- Future cycles of the PPA should identify partner districts early on so that advance contact can be made
- Research Teams should regularly gather information on local CSOs so that they can be provided with project documents and undertake advocacy at the district level

## **3.4 VILLAGE PARTNERSHIP**

### **3.4.1 Introductory process**

In some cases, District-based Research Partners initiated contact between the PPA and communities prior to the Team's arrival *en situ*. The advantage to this approach was that communities had more time to prepare for the Team. Consequently, the research could begin as soon as the Team landed in the community. However, there were two drawbacks associated with this approach.

First, some District Authorities either accidentally or intentionally misunderstood the role and/or nature of site selection criteria. Therefore, the communities that they identified prior to the Research Team's arrival may have been inappropriate. For example, some Authorities wilfully steered the Team either to a 'best-case' or a 'worst-case' community irrespective of the particular site selection criteria they were given. When this occurred, Research Teams were put in the awkward position of (a.) having to override the will of Local Authorities and/or (b.) disappoint communities that had been told to expect the Team's arrival. The only alternative would have skewed research results by deviating from site selection criteria.

Second, when communities were contacted in advance, the PPA's purpose was often inaccurately or incompletely communicated. In some cases, this resulted in communities generating a wish list of interventions (e.g. provision of a new well or school) to hand researchers when they arrived. People were inevitably disappointed to learn that the PPA could offer none of these things in any direct sense. While the Introductory Meeting with community members helped clarify what the PPA was capable of doing, damage had already been done. Indeed, villagers were happy with the PPA's purpose; but it was difficult for them to let go of hope for immediate solutions to their many problems.

An alternative strategy pursued (when logistically feasible) by some Teams was to send the District-based Research Partner and another researcher to a site while others stayed in the district HQ conducting background interviews, purchasing food, etc. This advance party met with village and ward leaders to explain – sometimes by using the Introductory Video – what the PPA was really about. This practice worked well and typically led to (a.) clear expectations and (b.) a sizeable turnout at the first Community Meeting.

### **3.4.2 Community introductory meetings and feedback sessions**

Research Teams only instigated two large-scale meetings per community. These were the Introductory Meeting and the Feedback Session.

The Introductory Meeting played a pivotal role in getting an *accurate* message out about the PPA's nature and purpose. As discussed above, the Introductory Video was key to achieving this goal. For the most part, these Meetings went very well in that they gave researchers and community members a first chance to know one another, set out important ground rules, etc. The biggest threat to these Meetings was the danger that party politicking would spoil the PPA's non-partisan stance.

Since it is a “Government” initiative, some people regarded it as a CCM project. Therefore, CCM politicians tried claiming the PPA to boost their own image and, in doing so, led their political opponents to label it as a “CCM brainwashing project.” Research Teams quickly learnt to pre-empt this situation so that they would not have to publicly denounce association with CCM and risk (a.) embarrassing local party bosses and (b.) subsequently losing their critical support. In the future, it may be advisable for Research Partners to routinely explain that the project is non-partisan and that participants can, therefore, speak freely.

Community Feedback Sessions were very well attended, with many drawing in excess of five hundred people. It is impossible to say how many people in these meetings were there for information versus entertainment. Regardless, they were given both. Indeed, these Sessions were often lively and sometimes erupted in heated debate – particularly with regards to local politics.

As a result, the Sessions were advantageous as a final means to triangulate information. However, this could probably have been done better in a ‘small group’ context. Therefore, the greatest benefits of the Feedback Session were arguably to: (a.) share information and (b.) provide local people with a *moderated* forum in which to air longstanding concerns and tensions. Though these situations were uncomfortable for researchers, many communities probably benefited from having a chance to get some facts and feelings out in the open. Indeed, despite the arguments they sometimes provoked, community members consistently told Team members that Feedback Sessions were valuable and deeply appreciated. Even village leaders who bore the brunt of hard-talk and accusations acknowledged that the meetings were a rare chance to talk about important matters.

Interestingly, *every* study site declared that the PPA was the first to feed back research results. In light of people’s enthusiasm for the practice, it should be maintained in future iterations of the PPA. Best practices adopted by Teams include:

- Using a range of methods to present information, including illustrative drawings, dramatisations and having local people present conclusions
- Showing the maps, etc. developed by discussion groups and leaving these with the village council

### **3.4.3 Government leadership, support and commitment**

It is difficult to assess the real degree of village leaders’ ideological commitment to the PPA. Certainly, they were motivated (at least in part) by a desire for District-based Research Partners to report their diligence, etc. This typically led to hard work by village leaders and determination to show they could mobilise local people in support of Government initiatives.

Regardless of their motivation, most community leaders worked extremely hard to ensure that Research Teams were reasonably housed and that their work progressed. Nonetheless, there were exceptions in which some village leaders demanded ‘allowances.’ Failing receipt of this payment, there were implicit and occasionally overt threats to sabotage the research process. In such instances, some Research Teams made concessions to ensure that their work could continue. Though its necessity may be regrettable, this response seems realistic.

It was far easier for Teams to justify paying village officials who actively contributed to implementation of the PPA. Though these officials were not, according to the *Procedures Manual*, supposed to be paid for their work, they often played a much larger role than had initially been expected. Indeed, many village officials (and, in particular, the Village Executive Officers) took the lead in mobilising community involvement in research activities. In such cases, Teams frequently took advantage of their discretionary budget to pay a small allowance to diligent leaders.

#### **3.4.4 Community mobilisers**

Community mobilisers played a critical role in the PPA by: (a.) helping people understand the purpose and nature of the PPA, (b.) identifying and organising participants for research activities and (c.) acting as key informants. Research Teams tried to encourage gender balance amongst the mobilisers and avoid party politics. The latter proved particularly difficult, and there was a constant risk of one party or another co-opting the research process. In the future, Teams should continue to stress the importance of people selecting politically impartial mobilisers.

Though most mobilisers were excellent, there were exceptions. Teams often relied on advice from village leaders and their own initial impressions to confirm community mobilisers. Consulting with villager leaders gave room to the possibility of party politics and favouritism influencing the selection process – especially when it was explained that mobilisers would receive a small (Tsh. 1,000 per day) tip as compensation for their time.

Some Research Teams asked village leaders to work as mobilisers due to their local knowledge and influence. It seems that some formal role for the VEO should be recognised. However, it also seems that there is more to lose than gain by taking community mobilisers from the ranks of villager leadership. Moreover, the cost of using party-affiliated mobilisers is likely to increase as tensions surrounding multi-party politics spread.

The PPA set a precedent by paying mobilisers Tsh. 1,000 per day for their work. Some Team members worried that this amount (equivalent to @ US\$1) could not be matched by other research programmes; and that the PPA should, therefore, avoid such payments in the future. These concerns are valid. However, it seems difficult to justify having a community mobiliser work eight or more hours per day for ten to twelve days without any material compensation. More to the point, it may not be financially possible for typical community members to do so.

#### **3.4.5 Follow-up of issues raised at community level**

The TzPPA has been designed to generate findings relevant to policies and planning for action at every level from the village to national Government. However, the PPA has neither the mandate nor resources to follow-up on policy recommendations.

In a number of cases, village and district officials asked researchers to help set up some institution to take responsibility for acting on information provided by the PPA. Even if this were possible, doing so would effectively duplicate local government



structures. This would be foolhardy. Therefore, the PPA should focus on meeting its primary responsibility to inform Government and Civil Society of research results.

#### **3.4.6 Community participation at district level feedback sessions**

Representatives from study sites were nominated by community members to attend District Feedback Session. As per PPA procedures, these representatives frequently included, but were never exclusively composed of, village-level officials. Their presence was intended to: (a.) reassure District officials that issues addresses in the PPA Site Report were accurately reported, (b.) allow for elaboration and (c.) facilitate dialogue between District officials and community members.

The tone of this dialogue varied tremendously. Village officials were typically reluctant to make any statement that implied criticism of their district-level ‘bosses.’ Therefore, it proved extremely worthwhile to have included others in the community delegation. This practice should be maintained. As a result of these dynamics, some issues were easily discussed. Others – and, in particular, taxation – inevitably entailed expressions of dissatisfaction with district officials. Research Teams made it clear that the PPA’s role was not to take sides, nor was the Feedback Session intended as an opportunity to berate district authorities. Instead, its goal was to stimulate discussion and give people a chance to speak and listen to each other’s points of view.

Unfortunately, many district officials remained publicly sceptical of testimonies about governance malpractice. At the same time, most acknowledged and valued direct dialogue with community members. There were exceptions. Indeed, one District Management Team was extremely hostile to the principle of meeting with community representatives and were angry with the TzPPA for including them. This is regrettable. However, given more common support for the practice, it is advised that community representatives be included in future District Feedback Sessions.

### **3.5 RESEARCH AT FIELD LEVEL**

#### **3.5.1 Duration of fieldwork**

Fieldwork typically entailed ten to twelve days in a community and up to four additional days in district HQs conducting introductory briefings, finalising site selection, gathering supplies and secondary data, conducting feedback sessions and writing site reports.

Many teams found this long list of activities to be overwhelming; no matter how efficiently they allocated tasks amongst themselves. When District Authorities were not immediately available, Teams were inevitable delayed. Fortunately, the Research Schedule helped accommodate some slippage by allocating two days to travel between sites. However, it should also be noted that Researchers frequently gave up erstwhile “days off” to finish writing reports, etc. Therefore, in future, it may be advisable to allow more days at district HQs so as to avoid the over-exhaustion/burn-out sporadically evident in the last weeks of fieldwork.

While teams generally felt they could manage the Research Schedule (which stipulated when they should enter and depart each site, etc.), some found the daily schedule to be too much. Indeed, the rush to pack several activities into a single day occasionally led to accelerated facilitation and a commiserate dip in quality.

To a degree, the severity of this daily time-crunch reflected poor organisation. In fact, some teams regularly took extended mid-day breaks. This time could have been put to better use. Developing detailed “Master Plans” led to an improvement. However, (a.) some teams did not learn to make Master Plans until late in the research process and (b.) this approach could not completely rectify the time-crunch. As a result, researchers frequently worked – despite working steadily throughout the day – until very late in the evening (sometimes until 2:00 am).

#### **3.5.2 Duration of research activities**

According to one researcher, the daily time-crunch some teams experienced led to “participatory *interviewing*, not very different from conventional data collection processes, giving *less* room for participatory discussions.” When it occurred, this was a serious problem and substantial threat to realising the PPA’s goals (which included learning best-practices, in addition to gathering reliable data). Certainly, the demand to get a lot of work done in a relatively short span of time contributed to poor practices. However, it is also evident that researchers were sometimes responsible for creating time-crunches when, for example, they organised meetings at the last minute (causing participants to arrive and begin the activity late).

Of course, it is inevitably difficult to make precise plans in field settings where people don’t use wristwatch. Nonetheless, improved planning minimised delays – as proven by all teams when they gained experience.

### 3.5.3 Timing of research

Work in many sites coincided with local rains. This led to (a.) delays in people arriving to participate in research activities and (b.) some grumbling when people were caught in sudden downpours.

Unfortunately, some overlap with rains would seem inevitable since they differ dramatically from north to south and east to west (due to bi-modal vs. uni-modal rains, etc.). Given the duration of fieldwork, these differences make it impossible to completely avoid travelling in any local 'wet season' (e.g. the *vuli* rains<sup>5</sup>). That said, research for the 2002/3 PPA Cycle was largely conducted during the period of heaviest *and* most pervasive rains. This may have been necessary to "catch up" to Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy revision process. However, in the future, it would be best to minimise travel during the March/April rains.

### 3.5.4 Logistics

Logistical elements of the PPA flowed quite smoothly – particularly in relation to the magnitude, severity and consequences of what could have happened. This fortunate outcome was largely due to ESRF, as an institution, backstopping the small PPA Management Team (which would otherwise have been overwhelmed with scale of preparations). Nonetheless, there were several noteworthy problems.

Perhaps the most serious of these was car breakdowns. The vehicles provided by the car hire company were subject to frequent breakdown. Some of these malfunctions could have led to life-threatening situations. Two vehicles broke down on their way out of Dar es Salaam (one en route to Arusha and the other en route to Mbeya), and both had to be replaced. Minor breakdowns plagued all the other vehicles. This led to additional costs and loss of time spent waiting for repairs to be done and/or a replacement vehicle to arrive.

It is unclear what recommendations to make. The PPA Management Team and Team Leaders took a number of steps to ensure that safe, reliable vehicles and drivers were provided. The car hire company, for its part, took demands for new cars and/or drivers seriously and quickly followed-up on complaints or notices of a breakdown. Perhaps, in the future, (a.) Team Leaders can thoroughly document and more consistently report breakdowns and (b.) more time can be taken to compare the track records of competing rental companies.

The third noteworthy issue is defective equipment. Some of the equipment supplied by ESRF was unreliable. This led to inconvenient repairs (often impossible in a field setting) or replacement. Both were costly in terms of time, missed opportunities, embarrassment and finances. This problem was particularly acute with regards to the television sets purchased to show the Introductory Video. In the end, four out of five had to be scrapped and replaced with Hitachi models.

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<sup>5</sup> *Vuli* rains are short and typically start between September and November in areas experiencing bi-modal rain pattern.

### **3.5.5 Research**

#### **3.5.5.1 Methodology & methods**

Even relatively experienced researchers learnt a lot through the PPA about participatory research, as a methodology. This was very helpful because it allowed Teams to understand the *why*, as well as the *how*. This freed researchers to innovate and experiment with particular methods (i.e. the *how*) so long as they stayed true to the underlying principles of a participatory approach.

In terms of actually conducting research, the most important lesson for Team members may have been how much more engaging and productive activities were in the context of small discussion groups versus large community meetings. Using this approach, the *diversity* of local experiences/perspectives was more reliably captured.

Both the common methods (e.g. Venn Diagrams) and special methods (e.g. Vulnerability Ranking) were very useful. However, the special methods demanded particularly strong time management and facilitation skills. As a result, they met with mediocre to excellent results. When Teams saw that the special methods were more challenging, they were frequently shifted to people with more experience. This put a disproportionate strain on some Team members. As already mentioned in this Evaluation, more training – particularly in these difficult methods – would have been helpful.

Such training could have had two important outcomes. First, more researchers would have been prepared to facilitate the most challenging methods. Second, researchers may have felt more confident about creating their own tools to investigate questions that came to light in the field.

#### **3.5.5.2 Use of the research agenda**

The Research Agenda was developed through a process engaging a wide range of stakeholders. This resulted in a “Research Agenda” (annexed in the Procedure Manual in English and Swahili) that was subsequently approved by the PPA Steering Committee. This should be considered a ‘best-bet’ practice. As a result, the Agenda focused on topics and issues of interest to data-users/policymakers. It therefore became a key instrument for the Teams to plan and evaluate their work in each site. Nonetheless, several problems were encountered.

First, though the Research Agenda facilitated fieldwork by providing a common starting point for work in each site, some researchers inappropriately treated it as *dogma*. In other words, they did not use it as a “starting point” to identify locally relevant issues to investigate but as a close-ended “checklist” of topics to cover. In these cases, the Research Agenda became an impediment, rather than a stimulus, to realizing the adaptive strength of the participatory research methodology and learning about locally significant phenomena that could not be anticipated in a Dar-based Workshop.

This misuse of the Agenda can be attributed to a failure of the PPA Training Programme to adequately address and overcome researchers’ previous

training/experience in conventional methods. When this problem was observed, Research Teams were helped to adopt a more flexible approach through the ongoing provision of *in situ* technical support. In the future, efforts should be made to hire short-term technical support to supplement that provided through the PPA Management Team so that Teams can “kick-off” correctly.

Second, the scope of the Research Agenda required strong time management to cover. This was a consistent problem until the introduction and use by Teams of an *Activity Master Plan* detailing what topics would be addressed with which discussion groups, when, and who would be responsible for organising, facilitating and reporting the activity.

Third, it was extremely difficult to translate some items on the Research Agenda into popular Swahili and local languages. Before leaving Dar es Salaam, the Agenda was translated. However, it should have been translated into the Swahili *actually* spoken by villagers. As a result, researchers sometimes fumbled with how to communicate what they wanted to say. The most infamous example of an untranslatable word was “vulnerability.” When the problem was explained to the Technical Advisor, he helped Team members use a drawing to illustrate an idea that everyone was familiar with – regardless of whether or not they had a specific word for it. While this input was very helpful, it was received only halfway through fieldwork. In future, researchers should take more time to plan how they want to communicate – through common language and/or other media – core research concepts and questions.

Fourth, some items on the Research Agenda proved extremely difficult to investigate and some social groups were hard to identify, access and assemble. Despite presentations made during the Planning Week on how to research sensitive topics (e.g. HIV/AIDS) and work with particularly vulnerable social groups (e.g. elderly persons and children), Teams had a difficult time overcoming hurdles. Reasons for this include:

- Researchers’ own reluctance to break through the cultural silence surrounding HIV/AIDS and sexual practices, as well as inexperience working with some social groups
- Community members’ reluctance to speak about sensitive topics or to be suspicious about the reasons for forming discussion groups with children, etc.

### **3.5.5.3 Activity plans and activity reports**

Providing Teams with standard forms for planning and reporting activities proved to be *extremely* useful. Indeed, the Activity Plan helped researchers systematically think about what they were going to do, how long it might take, etc. while the Activity Report helped them think about the kinds of information they needed to generate and record.

Unfortunately, some researchers – particularly those with different field experience – initially felt there was no need to fill in Activity Plans. When Team Leaders began checking to see if Plans had been written, some of these researchers refused or completed them retroactively (therein undermining the Plan’s purpose). This led to tensions. However, as researchers spent more time in the field, they began to appreciate the role of Activity Plans. In part, this was due to the experience of having suffered through poorly structured, organised and communicated research

activities. As a result, almost all researchers were filling in and using the Plans midway through fieldwork.

There were a number of difficulties surrounding the writing-up of Activity Reports. First, some research activities took much longer than expected because participants arrived late or did not want to stop talking, etc. When this occurred, researchers had less time available to spend writing Reports. The alternative, they felt, was to cut activities short. As this would have undermined the research methodology, Team members instead chose to sacrifice the time they had allocated to reporting. The result was less than adequate accounts of what people said, why, etc.

Some Teams chose to use Saturday and/or Sunday as 'catch-up' days for writing Reports that were not attended to/completed during the week. Unfortunately, many details and nuances were inevitably lost in intervening days.

Researchers were expected to take time to reflect on and critically analyse the results of individual activities. Thus, Reports were supposed to include information about what people had said and why, but *also* researchers' critical consideration of how it fit in with what had been learnt in other meetings, etc. There were three major reasons why many reports included less analysis than hoped for:

- Thoughtful analysis takes time, and this was often in short supply
- Many researchers have limited experience writing down their own thoughts and insights. This is because they are, more typically, expected to record only what has been said in the field and provide the results to senior researchers for analysis and interpretation.
- As a result of previously being confined to non-analytical roles in institutional report writing and survey-based research, some Team members insisted that (whether they were capable of contributing analysis or not) it was not their role to do so... that this should be done by 'professionals' back in Dar es Salaam

Obviously, some of these obstacles are more easily overcome than others. As Team's time management skills improved, they found themselves with more space to think about and write Reports. With regards to the outcome, quality inevitably varied from person to person. On the whole, there was evident improvement over time. The important thing to keep in mind is that, regardless of where they began, researchers' analytical skills are greater now as a result of their experience in the PPA. This has increased researchers' self-confidence and perception of themselves as someone with the *right* to be included in post-fieldwork analysis.

While the issues highlighted above may have been the primary reasons why some Reports were inadequate, periodic dips in energy and enthusiasm also took their toll. In these cases, it was important that Team Leaders had the authority to insist that Reports be improved upon.

It is worth noting that one Team assigned two members to review all Reports towards the end of their stay in a community. The first Team member was responsible for making sure that all topics in the Research Agenda had been covered. Meanwhile, the second person was responsible for identifying additional 'hot leads' that needed to be followed up or verified prior to departing the site. This innovation delivered outstanding results and should become standard practice.

### 3.5.5.4 Other reports and documentation

In addition to Activity Plans and Activity Reports, Research Teams were expected to complete:

- Standard Site Description
- Preliminary Site Report
- Final Site Report
- Administrative Reports

Standard Site Descriptions were designed to capture ‘routine administrative data’ at the district level and from village schools, health centres, etc. Unfortunately, this information was often extremely difficult to collect or non-existent. As a result, attempting to fill in the Description took a great deal of time and energy. This is not to say that it should not be done. Rather, it is to urge realistic planning. District-based Research Partners were often the best person to assign to this work, as they had locally recognised authority. (NB: It should be considered ‘best practice’ to leave completed copies of this form with village and district authorities as a professional courtesy.)

Preliminary Site Reports were intended as a discussion piece for District Feedback Sessions. In practice, Teams rarely had time to write a complete report prior to the Feedback Session. Therefore, Site Reports were often written afterwards and incorporated comments, etc. from the District Feedback Session. In such cases, there was no “Preliminary” Report – only a Final Report. Given the many demands placed on Teams, this seems a reasonable practice and may point a way forward for the next PPA Cycle. Two additional points are worth noting:

- A standard “Introduction to the PPA” was provided to Research Teams for them to insert at the beginning of each Report. This Introduction described the PPA’s context and answered questions about its methodology. Giving Teams a standard version saved them time and minimised the risk of miscommunication, etc. to local authorities.
- Site Reports required substantial editing before they were ready for official release and dissemination by ESRF. This may be inevitable. In future, this need should be planned.

Since Site Reports were written in English, Teams came up with alternative materials to leave in their research sites. These materials included Swahili translations of the Site Report, printed summary versions and summary versions written on poster paper. These possibilities should be discussed and a range of approved options agreed upon for future practice.

Though administrative procedures were put in place largely for the benefit of Team Members, instructions were not always followed. For example, some teams routinely failed to submit reports (in written form, by email, fax or at least by phone) from district HQs indicating the community in which they would be staying and a local emergency contact. This was a breach of agreed protocols. However, it was practically impossible to say whether this was due to negligence or the geographic isolation of Research Teams. In the future, Team Leaders should make a greater effort to ensure that administrative reports are filed in a timely manner. Breakdowns in communication were also troublesome.

Some Team Leaders have suggested that an additional ‘administrative’ report be drafted for submission at the *end* of work in each site. This form would include details about:

- The status of work (whether or not all work was completed)
- Locally active CSOs to be sent Site Reports
- Matters needing follow-up by Research or Management Teams

### **3.5.5.5 Team dynamics**

Research Teams were purposefully mixed in terms of gender, age, special knowledge base and experience. This diversity is valuable and should be maintained.

Nonetheless, under the stress of field conditions, it is perhaps inevitable that this diversity led to tensions. Dealing with tensions between Team members was one of the most challenging aspects of fieldwork. Sometimes, they expressed themselves in constructive criticism. Other times, critiques and accusations were less than constructive. One of the most serious problems was when ability to critique (i.e. communicate dissatisfaction), and therefore resolve a situation, was blocked by cultural mores governing what can be said between age and gender groups.

At least three principles served to keep Teams together despite these difficulties:

- Listening to and tolerating other people’s points of view
- Avoiding gossip
- Reminding others about the ‘Social Contract’

Commitment to these basic principles may have minimised the occurrence of serious incidents. Even so, two Research Partners were expelled from their Teams due to (a.) lack of hard work and (b.) breach of Social Contract. A number of lessons can usefully be brought forward from these experiences:

- Team Leaders should keep Management advised of troubles. It serves no one’s interests to ignore or hide problems until they have reached critical proportions.
- If researchers refuse to do their share of the work or abide by the Social Contract, they should be expelled as quickly as possible in order to minimise the disruption they cause within Teams and, sometimes, within study sites.
- The loss of a Research Partner results in a greater workload to be shared amongst those that are left. In future, it may be advisable to have one or two ‘extra’ researchers to shift around in case someone is expelled.
- A module on Team management/conflict resolution should be incorporated into the Training Programme or Planning Week.

### **3.5.5.6 VIP visits**

Research Teams appreciated the purpose and practice of VIP visits. Indeed, it was encouraging to see senior officials from Government and its development partners prioritising the allocation of time in their busy schedules to participate in the PPA and experience community life. This decision demonstrated their commitment to the TzPPA and gaining first hand insights into poor people’s circumstances. Visits by the Project Coordinator were also inspiring to Teams, and his participation in group



discussions were appreciated. It is, therefore, recommended that both these practices be maintained in the future.

Ideally, though, more VIPs would make it to the field. Only seven officials made visits this year. In large part, this was due to a scheduling clash between the period during which they were invited and Government's Public Expenditure Review and preparation for the *Bunge* budget sessions. Fortunately, the VIPs that did travel to the field were quite senior and/or were in positions of special influence.

Though the visits generally went well, some steps could be taken to ensure an even more positive outcome. For example:

- A TOR for the VIP visits was sent to Research Teams. However, it would have been helpful if Teams had had an opportunity to discuss with their colleagues how to treat and introduce VIPs, etc. Perhaps these matters could have been covered during the Planning Week.
- One VIP delegation introduced itself to its host community as the PPA's "funders." Team members were uncomfortable with this partial and awkward truth. Researchers felt that this might have given the impression that the PPA was donor, rather than Government, driven. In future, the PPA Management Team could spend more time discussing with VIP how they should (and shouldn't) present themselves, etc.

### **3.5.6 Recommendations from research at field level**

Based on lessons learnt in this section, the following recommendations are offered:

- 'Time Management' – including introduction of the Activity Master Plan – should be covered in some detail during the Planning Week
- Teams should receive additional technical backstopping during the first field sites
- More reliable vehicles should be hired and equipment purchased
- It would be better if, in the future, Research Agendas were smaller
- The format and practice of writing Activity Plans and Report should be maintained
- Much more attention should be paid during the Training Programme to how good Activity Plans and Reports are written
- Clear TORs, delineating standard introductions and conduct, should be given to guide visiting VIPs

## 3.6 ADDITIONAL ISSUES

### 3.6.1 First and Second Synthesis and Analysis Workshops

The Mid-term and Concluding Synthesis and Analysis Workshops were important events in the PPA research process. The objectives of the Mid-term Workshop were to:

- Pull together results from 1<sup>st</sup> round fieldwork
- Identify emergent patterns
- Assess the degree to which specific research questions had been reliably answered or needed verification/elaboration during 2<sup>nd</sup> round fieldwork
- Re-assess the Research Agenda in light of field experiences (in order to identify what topics or issues, if anything, needed to be refined, changed, etc.)
- Improve, through collaborative brainstorming, methods and procedures on the basis of 1<sup>st</sup> round experiences

In sum, the Mid-term Workshop aimed at seeing how research was progressing, identifying snags and coming up with solutions. In fact, the Workshop did go a long way towards achieving these goals – particularly in terms of helping Research Teams to see what information they needed to get in order for their work to be more thorough (e.g. collecting more data about historical changes in impoverishing forces).

Unfortunately, in order to cover all the topics needing attention, Workshop participants were swept along at a very quick pace. Sometimes, this did not allow them time to come to conclusions on their own. This sacrificed some of the PPA's hallmark “participatory” feel. At the same time, Research Partners were reluctant to spend more than one week in the Workshop, as they had families they wanted to visit after 2 and ½ months in the field, etc. Therefore, it is difficult to see what better compromise could have been reached. Perhaps the lesson is that the Workshop facilitator, PPA Management Team and Researchers should have more openly discussed the nature and implications of this compromise.

Following fieldwork, the next task of the TzPPA is to generate clear, compelling, useful reports. The Concluding Synthesis & Analysis Workshop was designed to involve participants in ordering, analysing and interpreting field data and in developing and evaluating alternative organizational models for communicating research results.

As such, the Workshop aimed to ensure that Research Partners play a larger role in the production of final reports than merely providing field data to a core group of analyst/authors. This purpose reflects the PPA's commitment to:

- Sharing real decision-making power amongst Implementing Partners (and, in particular, Research Partners) so that information developed during fieldwork is accurately re-presented in project reports
- Engaging researchers in all aspects of the process so that they gain a *holistic* repertoire of participatory policy research and advocacy skills

The Concluding Workshop largely met these aims.

Another difficulty encountered in both workshops was the consistently late arrival of some Research Partners. Perhaps if the workshops had been held outside of Dar es Salaam, this would have been less of a problem. Of course, this would have resulted in (a.) substantially greater expenses and (b.) researchers having to spend still more time away from their families.

### **3.6.2 Capacity building amongst researchers**

The 2002/3 Cycle of the TzPPA has been very challenging for *all* the researchers – including relative novices (e.g. Research Interns and most District-based Research Partners) and those with more experience (e.g. the majority of Research Partners and Team Leaders). This challenge has been intellectual, emotional and often physical. As a result, it would not be a stretch to say that every researcher has radically grown and become much more adept at:

- Managing team dynamics/interpersonal relations
- “Public relations”
- Dialoguing with the real ‘experts’ on poverty (i.e. poor people)
- Recording research activities
- Report writing (for use by the PPA, by communities and Local Authorities)
- Translating qualitative data into site reports
- Working late at night and on weekends until the job is done...
- Enduring the hardships that surround living in very poor communities

Contacts established during the research process have already started to pay off. For example, four out of five Research Interns have already been able to get new jobs that build on their experiences with the PPA. As a result, the training it set in motion continues so that these young people can play an important part amongst Tanzania’s next generation of participatory researchers.

There is also evidence to show that some of the skills and information gained by Research Partners is filtering back into their home institutions. For example, the AMREF Research Partner organized two training-sessions in participatory research for programme staff in Dar es Salaam and Mwanza. Likewise, Research Partners from Ministry of Finance, the Ilala Municipal Council, ActionAid, Care, Concern and Save the Children have given various presentations to their colleagues on insights garnered from the PPA.

The Institute of Development Studies (IDS-UDSM) has also benefited from its involvement in the PPA through: (a.) access to new reading materials about poverty, policy and research paradigms, (b.) the improved capacity of some staff to engage in pro-poor research, (c.) a better understanding of poverty by some teaching staff and (d.) using PPA materials to redesign the MA Programme in Poverty and Development.

Many Research Partners are keen to continue building their capacity to conduct participatory research by getting involved in the PPA’s writing-up process. As they have accurately noted, *research skills without report writing skills are of comparably little value* to their institutions. Of course, “writing by committee” is not advisable. However, the PPA Management Team should seek to involve Research Partners in the writing-up process.

While all of these accomplishments stand out, it seems unlikely that comparable progress has been made with regards to District-based Research Partners. Nor are there clear tips for the future. Though some DB/RPs have stayed in touch with the PPA and been involved in Synthesis & Analysis Workshops, etc. the majority are: (a.) far too distant from Dar es Salaam to continue direct involvement and (b.) too busy with their other responsibilities to practice their participatory research skills, follow up on developments in the PPA, and ensure local action in response to research results. Therefore, it seems unlikely that their two week collaboration with other researchers will lead to a sustainable change/improvement in what they do and how they work.

### **3.6.3 Recommendations from additional issues**

Based on lessons learnt in this section, the following recommendations are offered:

- When recruiting workshop facilitators, preference should be given to those that are familiar with the PPA process (in terms of its purpose, processes and operational style)
- The PPA should continue to prioritise building the capacity of its Implementing Partners to conduct all elements involved in meaningful participatory, policy-oriented research