Update on the Tanzania PPA Process – 15/4/02

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The first Quarter (Q1) of the Tanzania PPA Process ended on 31/3/02.

Q1 Synopsis

1.   Preparations for Research

The bulk of Q1 activities were dedicated to preparing and equipping the five PPA Teams to conduct high quality Participatory Policy Research. Details of these activities are provided in the 1st and 2nd PPA Updates.

2.   Fieldwork

Research Teams completed their training and left for the field, as planned, on 4th March. Despite heavy rains complicating logistics, studies have subsequently been concluded on time in the first and second sites.

During this period, the Technical Advisor has moved between Teams to:
- Help researchers improve and gain confidence in their skills
- Conduct "Debriefings," wherein researchers identify successes and reflect on how to overcome difficulties they have encountered
- Spread lessons learnt between Teams
- Document the research process
- Record people's "testimonies" on digital video (this has, for example, included villagers speaking as they wish about the consequences of land pressure, limited access to health care facilities and HIV/AIDS)

Some of the greatest challenges that Research Teams have faced include:
- Breaking through the silence surrounding HIV/AIDS to understand its impact on those who are HIV/AIDS+ and the people they depend upon for care.[1]
- Deciding how to handle sensitive information about forms of alleged corruption (from the abuse of power by teachers to that of senior government officials)
- Carefully managing time so that the work gets done *and* researchers find time for sleep…

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[1] Interestingly, researchers have found it easier to meet and speak frankly with commercial sex workers, drug-addicts, illegal migrants and land invaders than with people affected by HIV/AIDS.

Some of the most noteworthy successes include:

- ❑ Gaining the intense interest of district officials and community members in the Participatory Policy Research process
- ❑ Innovations, such as the use of an Introductory Video, have proved to be very helpful – not only at the community level, but also in explaining the purpose and nature of the PPA to district officials. The video's draw has been so great that attendance reached 400+ people in rural Nchenje village, Nkasi District (near Lake Tanganyika)!
- ❑ Moving slowly but definitively away from a problem-oriented to a solutions-oriented focus with regards to research on coping strategies and "safety nets"
- ❑ Building Team members' participatory research skills, as well as their capacity to engage in analysis and complex analysis of poverty-related phenomena

3.   Information Sharing/Facilitating Civil Society Engagement in Pro-poor Public Policymaking

The PPA has established a web site at: http://www.esrftz.org/ppa. In its fist month of operation, it received more than 500 visits!

Of course, the site hosts all key documents from the Tanzania PPA (including previous "Updates") and provides information about the progress of Research Teams. However, it also supplies information on:

- ❑ Important dates in the revision of the Tanzania PRSP
- ❑ Steps/points of engagement in other public policy processes
- ❑ Reviews and position papers on PRSPs by Oxfam, Save the Children and others…
- ❑ Links to other PPAs and reflections on PPAs

We hope that these unique WebPages prove to be a valuable resource to all individuals and institutions interested in learning about and improving upon PRSPs and PPAs. (Please note: we would be happy to make links or host further relevant information. Just tell us what we need to know at: ppa@esrf.or.tz)

Q2 Plans (the basics…)

1.   Fieldwork

The first-round (15 sites) of Fieldwork will continue through @ 3rd May. At that point, Research teams will reconvene in Dar es Salaam for a weeklong Synthesis & Analysis Workshop. Findings will then be presented to stakeholders in an inter-active Feedback Session held on 13th May (for further details, see: Synthesis & Analysis Workshop TOR).

The Workshop's specific goals include:
- Synthesising preliminary results
- Identifying emergent patterns
- Assessing the degree to which specific research questions have been reliably answered or need verification/elaboration
- Re-assessing the Research Agenda in light of field experiences (this may entail refining, changing, adding or subtracting items)
- Improving, through collaborative brainstorming, methods and procedures on the basis of 1st round experiences
- Developing a summary of 1st round results and 2nd round plans to share with stakeholders in an interactive, ½ day "Feedback Session."

The second-round of research will begin 19th May and last through mid-July. It will be capped with another Synthesis & Analysis Workshop (complete with Feedback Session).

2. Dissemination and Advocacy

During this second-round of research, a small number of very important persons (including key policymakers, approvers, implementers and collaborators) will be invited on brief site visits in order to:
- Better prepare them to receive and act on research results
- Provide them with an opportunity to meet and speak with rural villagers about their experiences of "vulnerability."

During their visit, guests will be expected to participate as co-learners in research activities.

Other advocacy-oriented activities slated to take place during Q2 include:
- Facilitating the production *by poor people* of a documentary video on vulnerability
- Facilitating the collaborative production by youth in two urban-sites of a rap song about vulnerability (Team members will help young people conduct "research" to identify, prioritise and write what they want to say, while a local rap star will help them turn this information into an engaging song)
- Distributing periodic PPA Updates