Poverty Policy in Africa and the Middle East: A Review of Poverty Monitoring

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Abstract

Much has been written during the 1990s about poverty. The main argument however, is that particularly in Africa, there is a dearth of information and that governments and donor agencies pay too little attention to this issue of poverty. This crucially limits effective and timely action against poverty. This paper analyzes the information that lies at the base of these debates. However, it is now recognized that knowledge of poverty in Africa and the Middle East has increased during the last decade. To illustrate this, the paper discusses information on trends and profiles of poverty. Nevertheless, the process has just begun for providing decision makers with sufficient and timely poverty information. At this time, information is still inadequate to rigorously cross-check, evaluate and answer significant questions which exist. Specifically two critical questions are raised regarding the available poverty information: (a) data availability, timeliness and quality; and (b) usefulness of the available data for the type and range of information needed by policy makers.

سياسة الفقر في أفريقيا والشرق الأوسط :

عرض لمراقبة الفقر

آرجان ديهان وشاهين يعقوب

ملخص

لقد كتب الكثير عن الفقر خلال التسعينات. ومع ذلك، فقد كان الجدل الرئيسى وعلى وجه الخصوص بالنسبة لأفريقيا، بأن هناك قلة في المعلومات، وأن الحكومات والمنظمات المانحة أو المتبرعة تعير اهتماما متواضعا جدا لقضية الفقر هذه. وهذا يحد من فعالية العمل ضد الفقر في الوقت المناسب. تحلل الورقة المعلومات التى تقع ضمن دائرة هذا الجدل. ومع ذلك، فقد أصبح معروفا الآن أن المعرفة بالفقر في أفريقيا والشرق الأوسط قد ازدادت خلال العقد الماضى. تناقش الورقة معلومات عن اتجاهات وصور وأشكال الفقر. وحيث أن عملية تزويد متخذى القرار بالمعلومات الكافية عن الفقر وفى الوقت المناسب، قد بدأت لتوها، فإن المعلومات لا زالت غير كافية بالشكل الذي يمكن من إجراء تدقيق مقطعى للتقييم والإجابة على المسائل الحاسمة الموجودة. وخصوصا المسألتين الحرجتين المثارتين حول وفرة البيانات عن الفقر : (1) وفرة البيانات، من حيث الوقت المناسب والجودة. (ب) فائدة البيانات المتوفرة من حيث نوع ومدى البيانات المطلوبة من قبل صانعي القرار.

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Introduction

This paper discusses the usefulness of currently available information on the poor, for designing public action against poverty in Africa and the Middle East. This issue is raised against the background of recent arguments that emphasize economic growth as a means of alleviating poverty. There is little debate that a link between growth and poverty exists. It is to be emphasized however that growth is not all that matters for poverty reduction. Firstly, even if economic growth rates explain 50% of the variation in poverty incidences as some recent research suggests, 50% is still unexplained, indicating a large margin for poverty-reducing policy. Secondly, studies reveal that the growth-poverty elasticity varies across regions and is the lowest in Africa. Thirdly, the "poor" cannot be regarded as a homogeneous group. In Kenya and Nigeria for example, extreme poverty increased while "moderate" poverty decreased, suggesting that the poorest profited less from economic growth. Overall in Africa, as to be discussed later, the poverty gap (average shortfall below the poverty line of the poor) worsened faster than the headcount index (share of population below the poverty line). This indicates that not only did more people slip below the poverty line, but that even among those already poor, many got even poorer. In the Ivory Coast for example, even in the context of a rapidly contracting economy, many of the poor were no longer poor a year later. [1] Therefore, anti-poverty policies have a role to play.

For anti-poverty interventions, policy-makers and program designers require accurate information on the poor. Without accurate and timely information, it is difficult to know whom to target with anti-poverty measures, and know who benefits from specific policies. Different anti-poverty interventions involve different levels of targeting. This results in different demands for information on the poor. Sectoral targeting, i.e. spending in sectors which are relatively more important to the poor (e.g. primary healthcare), is the least demanding in terms of specific information about the poor. Self-targeting, by definition, does not need such detailed information. Nevertheless, key information is still essential to know where to implement these programs for example, and to properly evaluate them. Several anti-poverty policies rely on administered targeting, which requires detailed information on the poor, to determine indicators or socio-economic categories highly correlated with poverty. Often, the record of administered targeting has not been good. In Burkina Faso during the mid-1980s, famine early warning systems were used to target food aid to the arid northern Sahelian zone. Yet, Sahelian households had higher and more diversified incomes than households in the more favorable agro-ecological zones in the south. As a result, better-off households living in the Sahel, received ten times more food aid than more vulnerable households in the south (Reardon *et al.* cited by Lundberg

[1] These data are discussed in greater details. Regarding the growth-poverty link, Ravallion and Chen (1996) conclude that generally speaking, growth usually benefits the poor. Lipton (1998) shows that about one-third of variation in poverty across countries may be explained with variations in GNP. Roemer and Gugerty (quoted by Killick 1997: 13) find almost a one-to-one relationship between overall GNP/capita growth and the incomes of the poorest 20% and 40% of the population. Findings by Bruno *et al.* (1996) which suggest that growth does not automatically result in rising inequality, strengthens expectations that growth will reduce poverty. de Haan (1998) discusses these themes in more detail.

and Diskin 1995: 16). Examples like this illustrate that fairly detailed knowledge is essential for avoiding targeting errors, such as leakage to the non-poor and imperfect coverage of the poor.

This paper discusses the information commonly available on poverty in Africa and the Middle East. Conclusions about trends in poverty and socio-economic profiles of the poor depend on the definition of poverty used. Some definitions have centered around broader notions of human capabilities combining health, education and income indicators (e.g. UNDP's Human Development Index). Other definitions have been narrower, focussing on single yardsticks of welfare. Other approaches have attempted to leave definitions of welfare to local communities themselves, rather than adopt externally imposed criteria. Each definition presents a degree of uncertainty whether some "justifiably deprived" people may have been ignored. Quite often, differences emerge in the groups identified as poor, and sometimes the differences are irreconcilable. Also, poverty definitions may be used to alter purposefully the recognized constituency of the poor (e.g. Ukraine Human Development Report 1996: 28).

The importance of definitional choice in poverty analysis is not underestimated which is later discussed. However, the focus is on inadequate consumption as a key element of poverty, supported by a few other indicators. In choosing other indicators, "output indicators" (e.g. life expectancy) are highlighted rather than what may be regarded as "input indicators" (e.g. access to health care). Such data are even less available than data on consumption-poverty. For practical reasons, the authors had to rely on international sources for information. This means that this report on poverty information is not as comprehensive as it should be. It is assumed however, that international efforts to gather information, specifically in Africa, would have uncovered significant sources of poverty information of high quality.

Poverty Trends

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has become the world's poorest region since 1988 when its GDP per capita fell below that of South Asia's. Africa has been falling behind, as inequality between countries has risen substantially. While global average per capita GDP grew at 1.0% during 1975-1985, SSA contracted by –0.3% (Barro 1997:21). In 1996, GNP per capita adjusted for purchasing power which in SSA was $1450, whereas in South Asia, it was $1520. In the Middle East and North Africa, it was much higher at $4530 (World Development Indicators Report 1998).

Recently, most African countries have exhibited positive economic growth with the exception of Angola, Cameroon, Zambia, Madagascar, Libya and Congo. Average annual growth in the Middle East and North Africa during 1980-1990 was 0.4% and 2.6% during 1990-1996. In 1997, SSA registered 3.7% growth in real GDP and 0.9% growth in GDP per capita (African Development Report (1997). However, growth in SSA has been too

low to make a real impact on poverty. To achieve a reduction in the number of poor of 2% per year in SSA, the World Bank estimates that growth of 6 to 7% is necessary.[2]

Table 1 shows recent trends in poverty in Africa and the Middle East compared to other parts of the world. The World Bank's estimates of purchasing power parity (PPP) consumption poverty shown in the table, are generally accepted as being reasonably, though by no means perfectly, comparable across countries and time.[3] The figures indicate that the number of "poor", defined as those living on less than $1 per person per day at internationally comparable prices, increased between 1987 and 1993 in SSA from 180 million to almost 220 million. The headcount index in SSA increased slightly until 1990, then fell slightly, but was in 1993 still higher than in 1987. Most striking in SSA perhaps, is the relatively rapid increase in the poverty gap after 1990, which measures how far below the poverty line the poor fell on the average. In contrast, in North Africa and the Middle East, poverty by all three indicators is much lower, with both poverty incidence and poverty gap falling. The absolute number of people in poverty has remained static at about 10 million.

Table 1. Population Living Below US$1 Per Day, 1987-1993 (1985 PPP Exchange Rates)

	Number of poor (millions)			Poverty incidence (%)			Poverty gap (%)		
	1987	1990	1993	1987	1990	1993	1987	1990	1993
Sub-Saharan Africa	179.6	201.2	218.6	38.5	39.3	39.1	14.4	14.5	15.3
Middle East & North Africa	10.3	10.4	10.7	4.7	4.3	4.1	0.9	0.7	0.6
South Asia	479.9	480.4	514.7	45.4	43.0	43.1	14.1	12.3	12.6
East Asia & Pacific	464.0	468.2	445.8	28.2	28.5	26.0	8.3	8.0	7.8
Eastern Europe & Central Asia	2.2	n.a.	14.5	0.6	n.a.	3.5	0.2	n.a.	1.1
Latin America & Caribbean	91.2	101.0	109.6	22.0	23.0	23.5	8.2	9.0	9.1
TOTAL	1,277.1	n.a.	1,313.9	30.1	n.a.	29.4	9.5	n.a.	9.2

Source: World Bank, Poverty Reduction, 1996: 4.

N.B. Poverty incidence is the proportion of the population below the poverty line. The poverty gap is the mean distance of the poor below the poverty line, expressed as a percentage of the poverty line. PPP is purchasing power parity.

[2] Cleaver and Donovan (1995),. Ravallion and Chen quoted in Demery and Walton (1998) have estimated that a per capita growth rate of 1.9% is required to halve $1/day poverty in SSA by 2015 (the International Development Target), when the actual growth rate between 1991 and 1995 was -1.35 though projected to be 1.1% for 1997-2000.

[3] Purchasing power exchange rates at 1985 prices are used by the World Bank to establish an international poverty line. PPP exchange rates are defined as the nominal exchange rate multiplied by the ratio of an index of world prices over an index of domestic prices. There have been questions about this method, however, because of uncertainties over local prices. Moreover, the lack of data which would allow PPP rates to relate more closely to the bundles purchased by the poor, poses additional problems for the poverty estimates.

These regional trends mask divergent country-level trends. Appendix Table B shows poverty estimates which are not based on the $1 per capita per day poverty line of Table 1, but on nationally determined poverty lines. This table stresses that there are very few countries for which trend data are available, and usually only for two points in time. The definitions of poverty underlying these estimates differ across countries, and so the trend in one country cannot be compared against the trend in another. Therefore, the comparison of trends across countries should be limited only to the direction of change, and should exclude the discussion on levels. In summary, the trends are:

- Tanzania - Poverty declined between 1983 and 1991.
- Rural Ethiopia - In the six villages for which panel data are available, poverty declined during 1989-1994/95.
- Kenya - Poverty declined slightly between 1981/82 and 1992.
- Ghana and Nigeria - Poverty declined sharply as both exhibited economic growth.
- Morocco - Poverty declined between 1970 and 1985.
- Sudan - Extremely rapid increase in poverty and inequality during the 1980s. There are doubts about the quality of the data (Hassan 1997). This was after an increase during the 1970s according to another data set (Farah and Sampath 1995).
- Côte d'Ivoire - Rapid increase in the poverty headcount between 1985 and 1988 (Grootaert and Kanbur 1995). Data for 1996 are not comparable to those of earlier years.
- Egypt - A steady increase in poverty between 1981/2 and 1995/6 (El-laithy 1998).

These estimates define poverty in terms of a lack of purchasing power over goods and services, e.g., below $1 per capita per day. Another way of understanding poverty, especially relevant in the African context, is to look at food intakes. Estimates of inadequate food intakes shown in Table 2, indicate that the proportion and number of people who are undernourished in terms of energy intakes, have increased in SSA since 1969-1971. In North Africa and Near East, while the proportion of undernourished has fallen, the absolute number of people who have inadequate food intakes has increased substantially during the 1980s from 27 million to 37 million. In terms of the intensity of food inadequacy, the average per capita energy consumption of the undernourished population, declined in SSA from 1490 kcal/day in 1969-1971 to 1470 kcal/day in 1990-1992. In the Middle East and North Africa, this figure rose from 1570 kcal/day to 1640 kcal/day (FAO 1996: Table 16). In other words, the hungry in SSA got even hungrier.

Table 2. Prevalence of Food Intake Inadequacy

	Period	Total population (million)	Proportion undernourished %	Number undernourished (million)
Sub-Saharan Africa	1969/71	270	38	103
	1979/81	359	41	148
	1990/92	501	43	215
North Africa and Near East	1969/71	180	27	48
	1979/81	236	12	27
	1990/92	323	12	37
East and South East Asia	1969/71	1166	41	476
	1979/81	1417	27	379
	1990/92	1694	16	269
South Asia	1969/71	711	33	238
	1979/81	892	34	303
	1990/92	1138	22	255
Latin America	1969/71	279	19	53
	1979/81	354	14	48
	1990/92	443	15	64
Developing countries	1969/71	2608	35	918
	1979/81	3260	28	906
	1990/92	4104	20	841

Source: FAO (1996), Table 14:.45

These inadequate food intakes are reflected in anthropometric measures. Trends in the prevalence of underweight children for the eighteen countries where they are available (usually two points in time only), are shown in Table 3. In some countries of Africa, over one in four children under 5 years are underweight. In most SSA countries, the trend appears to be stagnant or even worsening.

Adult body mass indices (BMI) are shown in Table 4 for available countries, about ten in total. Data on trends are not available from the same FAO source. The BMI measures a person's body mass standardized for the person's height. A value of under 18.5 is considered inadequate. In most countries, one in ten persons is found to have too low BMI. Notably, in each country, large proportions of the population have very high BMI. This phenomenon is being reported for more and more developing countries.

Table 3. Trends in Inadequate Child Weight, % of underweight under 5 year olds

	Survey Years				Prevalence, %			
Algeria	1987	1990	1992		8.6	9.2	9.2	
Egypt	1978	1990	1992	1995 [e]	16.6	10.4	9.4	16.8
Ethiopia	1982	1992 [a,d]			38.1	47.7		
Ghana	1988	1994 [b]			27.1	27.4		
Jordan	1975	1990			17.4	6.4		
Kenya	1982 [a]	1987 [a]	1993		22.0	18.0	22.3	
Lesotho	1976	1981	1992		17.3	13.3	15.8	
Madagascar	1984	1992			32.8	39.1		
Malawi	1981	1992			23.9	27.2		
Mauritania	1981	1991			31.0	47.6		
Morocco	1987 [d]	1992			11.8	9.0		
Rwanda	1976	1985	1992		27.8	27.5	29.2	
Senegal	1986 [d]	1993 [c]			17.5	20.1		
Sierra Leone	1975	1978	1990		31.0	23.2	28.7	
Togo	1977 [d]	1988			20.5	24.4		
Tunisia	1975	1988 [f]			20.2	10.4		
Zambia	1985	1988	1992		20.5	25.8	25.1	
Zimbabwe	1984	1988 [d]	1994		20.7	10.0	15.5	

Source: FAO (1996), Table 22: 72

N.B. [a] Rural areas; [b] Excludes some districts; [c] 0-35 months; [d] 6-36 months, adjusted 0-59 months; [e] 71-6 months; [f] 3-36 months.

Table 4. Adult Body Mass Indices, % of adults in each BMI class

		<16.00	16.00-16.99	17.00-18.49	18.50-24.99	25.00-29.99	≥30.00
Ghana	1987-8	2.8	3.9	13.3	62.0	17.1	0.9
Mali	1991	1.9	3.2	11.2	76.5	6.4	0.8
Moroc-co	1984-5	0.5	1.1	5.4	69.1	18.7	5.2
Senegal	1992-3	1.4	2.0	10.2	70.4	12.2	3.7
Tunisia	1990	0.3	0.6	3.0	58.9	28.6	8.6
Women only:							
Congo	1986-7	0.6	1.8	8.7	73.7	11.8	3.4
Ghana	1993	0.8	1.7	8.7	75.9	9.7	3.2
Kenya	1993	0.5	1.3	7.4	76.8	11.5	2.4
Moroc-co	1992	0.3	0.5	2.8	62.0	23.3	11.1
Zambia	1992	0.0	1.1	6.0	70.3	16.9	5.7

Source: FAO (1996), Table 25: 77

N.B. BMI is the weight divided by the height squared $(kg/m)^2$.

For other poverty-related indicators, data are reported over a much longer period. To provide an impression of these, data are presented at a regional level in Table 5. However, this does not mean that these are available for all individual countries. As with the poverty data reported in Table 1, these imply "educated guesses" for the countries in the region for which data are not available. These data suggest slightly more positive trends. Infant mortality rates have continued to decrease throughout 1970-1993, and as expected, much more rapidly in the Middle East and North Africa than in SSA. A similar continuing positive trend is indicated by the data on life expectancy. Primary school enrolment rates, however, have been declining in SSA since the early 1980s.

Table 5. Infant Mortality, Life Expectancy and Primary School Enrolment

	1970	1982	1987	1993
Infant mortality (per 1000 live births)				
Middle East and North Africa	135	90	67	53
Sub-Saharan Africa	132	112	103	93
Developing countries	97	71	63	54
Life Expectancy				
Middle East and North Africa	53	59	63	66
Sub-Saharan Africa	44	48	50	52
Developing countries	56	61	63	65
Gross primary school enrolment ratios (%)				
Middle East and North Africa	68	91	94	96
Sub-Saharan Africa	50	74	69	67
Developing countries	78	95	105	107

Source: World Bank, Poverty Reduction, 1996: 3.

N.B. Some of these figures do not correspond exactly to the years shown.

This section has summarized the available information on trends in poverty and related indicators. This confirms that a number of these indicators are worsening in SSA, but it also serves to emphasize how little is actually known for many countries. The regional averages can be misleading since they often include "analytically-derived estimates" rather than "measured estimates" for many countries thereby involving considerably greater assumptions. Poverty trends are available for at best, only ten countries in the region, and for child weight, for less than 20 countries. Moreover, this is usually for only two points at a time, which is insufficient to talk about trends in the proper sense. The next section looks at the kind of data available at the meso-level regarding the characteristics of poverty.

Poverty Profile

This section illustrates the kinds of information available on the characteristics of the poor commonly used for administered targeting of benefits and for analyses of effects on policies on specific groups. It also illustrates some commonalities, from which rules of thumb for targeting may be developed. Significant differences exist which policymakers need to be informed about, when formulating anti-poverty interventions. Policies are likely to fail if for example, the heterogeneity among the poor is ignored such as circumstances, vulnerability, characteristics, etc. Differences and divergences among the poor, rural-urban differences, economic or employment characteristics, gender, age, education and ethnicity are discussed.[4]

Economic Divergences among the Poor

The poor is not a homogeneous group, and neither are trends uniform. Not all the poor profit equally from economic growth, or suffer from decline. Table 1 shows that overall, the poverty gap decreases or increases in line with the headcount index. The average of the Middle East and North Africa conforms to this pattern. Also, in Ghana, both intensity of poverty and incidence of extreme poverty declined in line with the incidence of moderate poverty.[5] In Ethiopia, between 1989 and 1994, poverty depth declined even more rapidly than the poverty headcount.[6]

In SSA, between 1987 and 1993, the poverty gap increased faster than the headcount index, suggesting diverging patterns among the poor. Such a change is illustrated by Kenya between 1981/82 and 1992. While the incidence of rural poverty fell from 48 to 46% in 1992, the incidence of rural extreme poverty increased from 11% to 20%. For both poverty and extreme poverty, depth increased.[7] Conversely in Egypt, while

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[4] Part of the review of the literature, particularly for Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana and South Africa, was carried out earlier by Eliane Darbellay for the 1997 Human Development Report. For these countries, information is based on World Bank Poverty Assessments, unless otherwise stated. The list of poverty correlates is by no means exhaustive. It does not include, for example, information about household size, or ownership of assets (e.g., in Ethiopia, ownership of land as well as oxen were found to be important factors in the decomposition of poverty changes between 1989 and 1994 (Dercon and Krishnan 1998: 27), or regional differences, which are usually substantial. The 1997 World Bank Progress Report on Africa lists household welfare indicators for urban and rural expenditure quintiles for 15 SSA countries.

[5] Along with the reduction in all poverty measures, there has also been a slight decrease in income inequalities between 1988 and 1992. Deininger and Squire (1996) give values of Gini coefficients of 0.36 for 1988, 0.37 for 1989 and 0.30 for 1992.

[6] Dercon and Krishnan (1998: 21). However, the same study also shows that changes in poverty differed across the villages. For example, distance to towns and roads mattered in accounting for the poverty changes over time.

[7] The line for extreme poverty was set at 1/3 of mean per capita household expenditure. Along with the worsening condition of the poorest in terms of poverty incidence and intensity, income inequalities have increased over the 1980s. The Gini coefficient increased from 0.51 to 0.56 between 1981/82 and 1992 at the national level, and from 0.40 to 0.49 in rural areas (World Bank Kenya 1995).

the incidences of rural and urban poverty rose between 1990/1 and 1995/6, the incidence of rural extreme poverty fell; the same applies to poverty depth measures. With the economic recovery of Nigeria, poverty decreased rapidly between 1985 and 1992. However, while the absolute number of the poor decreased from 36 million to 34.7 million, the number of extreme poor increased from 10 million to 13.9 million.[8]

The Ivory Coast illustrates some unexpected effects under economic contraction. The increasing poverty corresponds with the 28% GDP per capita fall between 1985-1990. But poverty did not decline as fast as the economic contraction, and inequality actually decreased. Furthermore, Grootaert and Kanbur (1995) conclude from panel data for three successive periods that despite the severe economic recession, there was heterogeneity among the poor, and that some of the poor were upwardly mobile in the short run. The proportion of the extreme poor who were not-poor one year later is quite high at 27%, 23% and 6% in each of three successive one-year panels.

Spatial Location of Poverty

By far, the largest number of poor in Africa and the Middle East live in rural areas, though the balance is shifting towards the expanding cities. Rural poverty incidence, and often also the poverty gap, tend to be much higher than urban poverty. This is illustrated in Table 6 which shows for example that in South Africa in 1993, rural poverty was 73.7% and in urban areas, 40.5%. The picture however, is not uniform.

Firstly, within the urban category, smaller urban and peri-urban areas have much higher poverty than main cities. For example, in South Africa in 1993, urban poverty overall was 40.5%, but in the metropolitan areas, it was less than half of that at 19.7%. In Mauritania, poverty incidence in peri-urban areas in 1990 was 54%, much higher than the 18% in the main urban centres of Nouakchott, Nouadhibou and Zouerate, and much closer to the incidence in the rural centre of 62%. In Cameroon, in 1983/4 (the latest year for which a national household survey existed), the poverty incidence in Yaoundé was 1% with urban areas of the South registering 34% and in rural areas of the South at 47%. Data on Kenya suggest that there are pockets of extreme poverty in cities. In 1992, 46% of the rural population had a level of expenditure below the upper poverty line, and 20% below the extreme poverty line. In urban areas, the respective figures were 29 and 25%, i.e. extreme poverty incidence was higher in urban areas.

Secondly, trends in some of the countries show a relative worsening of urban poverty. In Ghana, rural poverty declined from 42% in 1988 to 34% in 1992. Though poverty remained worst in rural areas, especially in rural Savannah, poverty incidence increased in Accra, from 8.5% in 1985 to 23% in 1992. Similarly, data on Sudan given by Farah and Sampath (1995) between 1967-8 and 1978-80, suggest that poverty is much more severe in rural areas but that there was a much more rapid increase in urban than in rural poverty. In Nigeria between 1985 and 1992, the number of poor in rural areas fell from 26.3 to 222.8 million, while in urban areas, it rose from 9.7 to 11.9 million. For the

[8] Income inequalities among the whole population increased from Gini 0.387 in 1985 to 0.449 in 1992, and among the poor from 0.188 to 0.251.

extreme poor, there was a similar trend in urban areas with a huge increase from 1.5 million to 4 million people (rural extreme poverty rose from 9 to 10 million).

Table 6. Rural-Urban Poverty Differences

	Year	Poverty incidence			Poverty gap		
		National	Rural	Urban	National	Rural	Urban
Cameroon	1983-84 ibid.	40	71 41-47	25 1-34			
Côte d'Ivoire	1988	45.9	77	23			
Egypt	1997	26.5	29.1	23.1	6.7	7.5	5.7
The Gambia			66	33			
Ghana	1988 1992	36.9 31.4	42 34				
Guinea-Bissau			58	24			
Kenya	1992	46.4 (48.7)	46.4	29.3			
Lesotho			54	55			
Madagascar			37	44			
Malawi			63	10			
Mauritania	1990	57	62-75	18-54	0.50	0.53-0.57	0.29-0.40
Niger	1993	63	66	52	0.22	0.23	0.18
Nigeria	1985 1992	43 34.1	36	30	15	16	12
South Africa	1993		73.7	40.5			
Tanzania	1991	50.5	59	61			
Tunisia	1985	11.2	19.1	4.6			
Uganda			57	38			
Yemen, Rep. Of	1992	19.1	19.2	18.6	5.7	5.9	5.1
Zaire			76	32			
Zambia			88	46			

Sources: World Bank Poverty Assessments: Ghana, Kenya, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa, Yemen, Tunisia and Cameroon 2nd row.

Cleaver and Donovan (1995): Cameroon (1st row), Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire and Zambia.

Datt *et al.* (1998): Egypt.

N.B. Poverty lines are not the same, and therefore poverty estimates are not comparable across countries.

Sectoral Correlates of Poverty

Poverty is usually linked to economic activities or sectors, particularly agriculture. This is especially important for policies that target or affect particular sectors. In South Africa in 1993, the poorest were much more likely to depend on agriculture as a main source of income than the rich. Of the poorest households, 37% depended on agriculture as a main source of income, against less than 1% of households in the richest quintile. The richest households depended largely on regular wages (84%), against 19% for the poorest. In Ghana, while poverty declined for all socio-economic groups between 1988 and 1992, the incidence and intensity of poverty remained the highest among food crop and export

crop farmers. In 1992, poor households derived 48% of their income from agricultural activities, and non-poor households 37%.

In Nigeria, employment status of the household head was closely related to poverty in both 1985 and 1992. In 1985 and 1992, both in rural and urban areas, the highest incidence of poverty was found among the self-employed: at the national level, in 1985, their poverty incidence was 53% against 46% for wage earners. In 1992, it was 35% against 28%. Agricultural workers formed the largest component of the extreme poor in 1992, albeit falling from 87% in 1985 to 67% in 1992. Detailed data from Côte d'Ivoire (Grootaert *et al.* 1997) show that in rural areas, households with diversified income sources managed the recession relatively well. So did public sector workers and export crop farmers.

Female-Headed Households

Although ambiguities and variations are recognized in definitions of the term "female-headed households", it is commonly argued that they deserve special public attention because they face the triple burdens of poverty, gender discrimination and absence of support as heads of households (Buvinic and Gupta 1997). Poverty within female-headed households may also be related to the perpetuation of poverty over generations because children in these households tend to be more vulnerable. Three reasons may cause the link between female headship and poverty: (a) higher child dependency unsupported by transfers from absent fathers; (b) gender-related gaps in economic opportunities; and (c) demands and disruptions of domestic chores and childbearing.

However, poverty data show that female-headed households are not always worse off. On the one hand, for example, the Participatory Poverty Assessment conducted in 35 Kenyan villages in 1994, indicates that there were twice as many female-headed households (44%) than male-headed households (21%) among the very poor. Similarly, in South Africa the poverty incidence in female-headed households was around 67%, while it was 44% for male-headed households. Extreme poverty incidence was 38% among female-headed households and 24% among male-headed households (Pillay 1996). In Ethiopia, while overall poverty declined by 15% during 1989-1994, female-headed households experienced no significant decline (Dercon and Krishnan 1998).

By contrast, in Nigeria, the incidence of poverty was greater among male-headed households than female-headed households (44% at the national level in 1985 and 36% in 1992 for male-headed households, against 37% and 21% respectively for female-headed households). In Ghana in 1992, male-headed households had a slightly higher incidence of poverty than female-headed households, i.e. 32% versus 29%. The same was true in Niger where divorced or widowed women traditionally live under the guardianship of a male relative. Poverty incidence among male-headed households was 64%, and among female-headed households 55%. Poverty depth and severity was also higher in male headed households. In Côte d'Ivoire, female-headed household was not a significant factor in explaining poverty.

Underlying some of these variations is the fact that the significance and meaning of female-headed households – or indeed the term "households" itself – vary across countries, e.g., in areas with a tradition of women living apart from partners in polygamous societies

of West Africa, in areas with matrilineal descent where women have economic means, or where male remittances are regular and generous (Buvinic and Gupta 1997). Relating poverty to household characteristics is one of the most difficult issues in poverty research, for at least four reasons. Firstly, it touches directly on intra-household inequalities, and area which household surveys do not deal with. Secondly, it emphasizes the importance of household size and composition for the very measurement of poverty. Thirdly, across the region, household forms differ so fundamentally that it is difficult to generalize about the status of men, women and children. Finally, even if female-headed households are not over-represented as compared to male-headed households, they may still be more vulnerable in other respects. The data that exist, moreover, present a varied picture about the vulnerability of various types of households. These suggest that policies should be sensitive to the specific forms in specific areas.

Age and Poverty

Different age groups experience different poverty risks. This is often related to life-cycle effects, and to the earner-dependent ratios of households. However, this is not uniform. In Nigeria, poverty incidence was the lowest among households whose head was between 16 and 25 years old. The older the household head, the more likely the household was to be in poverty In 1985, 46% of the households with heads between 36 and 55 years were poor, and 52% of the households with heads over 66 years. In Ethiopia, households with younger heads experienced larger declines in poverty than those with older heads. In South Africa, children constitute a large part of the poor population. In 1993, 61% of children lived in poverty, against 47% of the 16-64 years old and 52% of the over 64 years old.

The World Bank's 1997 Status Report on Africa (Table 7) provides an overview of the probability of being poor by age group in 14 countries. In all countries, in both rural and urban areas, the probability of people in the age group 0-14 years is higher than in the age group 15-59 years. The difference is particularly high in rural Côte d'Ivoire, with a difference of 12 percentage points. But the probability of being poor is not usually higher among the elderly (60 and over).

Education

Lack of education is often linked with poverty. In 1987/88, among Ghana's heads of households without any education, 28% were in the poorest expenditure quintile. No households whose heads had secondary or university education were in this quintile. Only 12% of the households with heads without education, as against 60% of the households with heads with secondary education were in the richest quintile. In Kenya in 1992, the primary enrolment rate in rural areas was 63% for households in the poorest decile and 78% in the richest decile. In Ethiopia, human capital variables mattered in accounting for changes in poverty between 1989 and 1994.

But again, these correlates are not uniform. Using the 1987-8 panel from the Côte d'Ivoire dataset, Grootaert *et al.* (1997) relate household characteristics to changes in household per capita expenditure. Education, up to but not beyond basic diploma level,

mattered most in explaining welfare over time in urban areas, while in rural areas physical capital (land and farm equipment) mattered most.

Ethnicity

Relatively little is known about the contribution of ethnicity and race to differences in poverty. It is clear however, that this is a significant factor. South Africa shows extreme inequality between different racial/ethnic groups, but differences also exist in other countries. According to Whiteford and McGrath (1994), while the incidence of poverty has decreased between 1975 and 1991 for Africans from 68 to 67.2%, coloreds from 52 to 38.6%, and Indians from 30 to 19.6%, it has increased for whites from 3% of households to 9.5%. In 1991, the bottom quintile included a significant proportion of whites, contrary to 1975. The top quintile comprised a greater proportion of blacks than in 1975. The distribution however, remains still extremely unequal, and South Africa's poverty map is still one dominated by racial divides. Sometimes regional variations in poverty indicate ethnic variations, and sometimes, they also correspond to divergences in poverty between nomadic groups and the rest of the population.

In summary, an important conclusion, from the limited data presented here, is the diversity in profiles of the poor. In some cases, economic growth is accompanied by a worsening of income distribution among the poor, for example in Nigeria during 1986-1992. It may involve a redistribution of poverty between urban and rural areas even if rural poverty remains higher overall. Data on Ethiopia suggest that some of the poor, the better educated and younger, have profited more from economic growth than others. Poverty correlates show some generalities, but it is not always the case, e.g., that female-headed households are worse off. This diversity reinforces the earlier conclusion that good quality data, at a sufficiently disaggregated level, are essential for policy interventions related to poverty.

Is Poverty Information Sufficiently Available?

The poverty profiles presented are based on nationally representative household surveys. Without the conclusions about poverty at the national level and about trends, these become meaningless. They are essential to provide disaggregated information about the poor, and hence are essential for targeting. To obtain reliable information on poverty, expenditure surveys are usually preferred over income surveys. This is because they provide more reliable and stable information about welfare due to consumption smoothing. Such surveys are essential for anti-poverty policies, but they have disadvantages as well. In the first place, it takes time for the results to become available not only because of the time required to process the data, but also because of the need to collect data throughout the year to capture the effects of seasonality. Secondly, the data themselves do not explain poverty, they merely record it. To explain poverty, qualitative information is essential to shed light where survey data have not, such as regarding vulnerability, assets depletion, survival strategies, etc.

This section discusses whether sufficient poverty information, both of the quantitative and qualitative types, is available in the region. It is generally acknowledged that too little information is available about the socio-economic condition of Africa's population. A major difficulty is that, except for a few countries of the region (Ivory Coast, South Africa, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe), household panel data do not exist. This means that most poverty analyses provide a static picture of poverty. Discussions of poverty trends focus on some aggregate level, rather than on individual level. Thus, the mobility of households in and out of poverty – which tends to be more common than often assumed – and the processes determining poverty status and changes, remain unknown.

Data on consumption poverty based on household surveys, have become available for an increasing number of countries. Around 1993, about 66% of the people in SSA countries and 47% in the Middle East and North Africa, were covered by a recent, fairly reliable household survey (Ravallion and Chen 1996). Table 1 is based on this information. This is an enormous improvement over 1990 when less than 10% of SSA's population had been covered by a household survey. The improvement has continued since Ravallion and Chen's count.

Appendix Table A lists the data collected from internationally available sources. This indicates that data more recent than 1980, exist for 30 countries in SSA, and 5 in North Africa and the Middle East. For 23 countries, international comparable data on poverty levels are available. For another 7 countries, nation-wide representative poverty data are available but are not internationally comparable. Data presented by Cleaver and Donovan (1995) add 2 countries, Malawi, Zaire, to the list. A publication by van Holst Pellekaan and Hartnett (1997) presenting data on relative poverty, adds another 3, i.e. Burkina Faso, CAR and Sierra Leone to the list of non-comparable data.[9] The recent Status Report on Sub-Saharan Africa of the World Bank's Africa Region indicates that since the mid 1980s, 72 national surveys of different types have been carried out in SSA in 35 countries. This suggests a near-complete coverage of the region, even if not all data have been analyzed or published.

Many of these nationally representative surveys have been sponsored and technically supported by the World Bank. Its initiatives to generate data on levels of living date back to 1980, when the *Living Standards Measurement Study* surveys (LSMS) were established. These aimed to develop methods for monitoring progress in raising levels of living, identify the consequences for households of current and proposed government policies, and improve communications between survey statisticians, analysts and policy makers.[10] The surveys include many dimensions of household well-being, and use

[9] Data in Deininger and Squire (1996a) show an additional 3 countries for which survey data are available, i.e. Gabon, Seychelles, Sudan, but all from the 1970s. For South Africa which does not have similar data, Whiteford and McGrath (1994) argue that the distribution of mean household income within the poorest deciles of households deteriorated between 1975 and 1991 which is a period with relatively low economic growth, while the income of the upper deciles remained relatively stable.

[10] Grosh and Glewwe (1995) provide a catalogue of LSMS data sets; this is being up-dated. Grootaert and Marchant (1991) describe the initiatives with regard to data collection under the Social Dimensions of Adjustment in Sub-Saharan Africa programme. They conclude that the SDA programme is fundamentally

extensive quality control procedures. The *Social Dimension of Adjustment Project* assumed responsibility for the LSMS surveys in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Mauritania. It also sponsors *Integrated Surveys* (similar to LSMS surveys), for example in Uganda, Mauritania, Madagascar, Senegal and Guinea, and also *Priority Surveys*, and *Community Surveys*.[11] More recently, the *Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire* (CWIQ) was developed in collaboration with UNICEF and UNDP. This rapid monitoring tool to measure key indicators for different population groups is seen as useful in monitoring outcomes of policies. Apart from these World Bank initiatives, organizations like the IFPRI, Cornell's University Food and Nutrition Policy Program, and Universite Laval with UNDP and the University of Benin, have sponsored surveys.

Most countries in the region therefore, have some nationally representative household surveys. Obviously, in countries like Liberia and Somalia, these are not administered because of the conflicts. Only in a few politically stable countries, i.e. Equatorial Guinea and Togo, that no poverty monitoring takes place. According to the Status Report of the World Bank, in 20 countries, poverty monitoring has taken place in the past and is planned for the future. Most of those countries included have been referred to above. For example:

- Kenya has been the subject of intensive socio-economic analysis, and has a well developed statistical information system. The results of two *Household Budget Surveys*, for 1981/82 which had information only on rural poverty and for 1992, have become available. Another survey was carried out in 1994. Participatory assessment has also become common, with a second central one carried out in 1997.
- In Ghana since the second half of the 1980s, substantial research on poverty has been undertaken. The three *Living Standards Household Surveys* of 1988, 1989 and 1992 provide comparable data. The World Bank produced two *Poverty Assessments* synthesizing the results obtained in the surveys. The *Participatory Poverty Assessment* (Norton *et al.* 1995) broadly confirms the quantitative analysis.
- Nigeria is the largest country in SSA with nearly 20% of the region's population, but until recently, little information on poverty was available. The World Bank's Poverty Assessment on Nigeria provides a first good overview of poverty and its correlates over the 1980s, relying mainly on two national consumer surveys of 1985 and 1992. In 1993 a sample survey of agriculture was carried out, and in 1996, a national consumer survey.
- South Africa's *Integrated Household Survey*, conducted between 1993 and 1994 by the Southern African Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU), offers nationally representative data. However, it provides income but not expenditure data. The absence of earlier large-scale studies impedes conclusions on the evolution of

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different from that of the LSMS. Aho *et al.* (1998: 28) describe earlier pioneering African Consumer Expenditure Surveys, and the National Household Survey Capability Programme of the UN.

[11] *Priority Surveys* provides rapid information to policy makers that would be used to identify target groups, and to provide key socio-economic indicators for such groups. The survey is based on a relatively short questionnaire for a relatively large sample of households. *Integrated Surveys* provides detailed information to investigate responses of different households to adjustment. It uses lengthy and detailed questionnaires on a somewhat smaller sample. *Community Data Collection Programme* aims to provide a baseline, and monitor information on markets and infrastructure in the economy.

poverty and related indicators over time. Before the 1980s, much poverty research focused on poverty among white South Africans. However, since 1970, several authors have attempted to estimate the incidence of poverty in South Africa, using mainly the Minimum Living Level (MLL) poverty line.

It is clear that there have been many initiatives to improve the data collection in Africa. However, they vary in scope and quality. Striking even in the World Bank's *Poverty Assessments* is the lack of uniformity. Some assessments have been considered deficient by the World Bank itself. Often, data are so outdated as to make them useless for policies. There is also a lack of information on the links between economic growth and poverty reduction, and it is difficult to estimate the effect on poverty of alternative policies.

One of the main problems which continues to hinder the analysis of poverty is the lack of trend data. Trends cannot be deduced from one-off surveys, and where surveys are available for two points in time, care is needed before trends can be ascertained because they may come from unusually good or bad years (e.g. Guinea-Bissau). Appendix Table B lists 10 countries in the region for which data are available about changes in poverty but these are mostly for two or three points in time only. According to the 1997 World Bank Status Report, 15 countries in SSA have implemented two surveys although some have carried out more. But in much fewer cases are the surveys comparable.

Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 report available data on indicators related to consumption poverty. Like the poverty data, such data mask significant informational problems. Estimates on the prevalence of food intake inadequacy (Table 2) amount to little more than guesswork in many countries. For example, such prevalence estimates should rely on the distribution of dietary energy between individuals, but information is available on the distribution between households. And even then, data are available for only 18 countries. Dietary energy intake distributions for some other countries are determined from distributions of income or expenditure. Yet in some countries this approximation is not feasible and so "figures are imputed based on neighbouring countries with similar socio-economic situations" (FAO 1996: 41).

Trends in child anthropometry are shown in Table 3. Beyond the FAO source, this type of data is also becoming increasingly available through the World Bank-sponsored *Integrated Surveys* and *Priority Surveys*. According to the World Bank's 1997 Status Report, anthropometric data are available in 22 data sets for 14 countries.[12] But these data suffer from the common concerns about comparability, as surveys even within the same countries use different methodology, sample frames, and reference age-groups which are of crucial relevance for the outcome. Finally, data on child or infant mortality, life expectancy, literacy or enrolment rates, according to some sources are available for almost all countries

[12] This allows testing of the correlation between anthropometric data and income poverty data. According to the Status Report, stunting is closely related to income levels, but wasting is highly variable.

in the region. However, these data can seldom be disaggregated in the desired way, and are reasonably reliable only for the census year.[13]

Qualitative or participatory approaches to monitoring poverty have now become common. They are included in the World Bank *Poverty Assessments* with differing degrees of effectiveness. They have been instrumental in rapidly tracing the effects of the crisis in East Asia (Robb 1998). In Ghana, for example, the *Living Standards Household Surveys* of 1988, 1989 and 1992 have been complemented by *Participatory Poverty Assessments* (PPA) which broadly confirmed the quantitative analysis (Norton *et al.* 1995). The PPA categorized levels of poverty in villages following a subjective wealth-ranking exercise, and a group discussion of the characteristics of the very poor, poor, average and rich people. Once consensus was reached, people were asked to categorize each household in the community in one group. Common methods are community maps which illustrate where people live, flow diagrams showing links and causes, seasonal calendars, matrix analysis and wealth ranking. They often involve traditional anthropological methods such as semi-structured interviews with key informants and contact persons, which aim to obtain information from individuals who are thought to have sufficient knowledge about issues or groups of people of interest. A key feature is the concern with obtaining only "enough information" rather than "as much information as possible". The primary strength is in assessing relative values, which can be useful in monitoring situations where policy impacts are assessed. While such assessment usually have been carried out in small locations by local NGOs, attempts have been made to scale it up. In Kenya and Tanzania, participatory rural assessment (PRA) was used in poverty assessment by sampling a large number of communities and using pre-designed scoring cards and categories to produce comparable results.

There are problems with PPAs as well. Firstly, scaling up is not simply a matter of duplicating the exercise in several localities; institutional mechanisms for coordination and analysis need to be in place. Secondly, while most PRA exercises focus on relative values, absolute values are crucial for comparative purposes which relates to the problem of scaling up. Thirdly, the explanatory power of subjective data has been questioned. Ravallion (1996) compares the predictive power of subjective and objective data and concludes that subjective welfare questions did predict consumption with some degree of accuracy, but not as much as objective indicators. Answers and discussions of subjective questions are also prone to being influenced by the presence of a facilitator and other community members. PPA is usually seen as a cheap alternative to more expensive household surveys. However, in the context of poverty monitoring, PPA is a relatively expensive method compared to the monitoring of a limited number of indicators, whether from existing data sources or through short surveys. Finally, it is unlikely that participatory monitoring could accurately track the full primary and secondary effects of macroeconomic and sectoral reforms.

[13] Composite indicators, such as UNDP's Human Development Index, have been proposed and have rapidly obtained political significance. These give a rough indication of welfare, but provide little added value to the primary indicators on which they are based and are subject to the same data constraints.

Participatory techniques are particularly useful in adding depth of understanding to the quantitative data collected by large-scale household monitoring surveys. Some of the methods can be usefully implemented for rapid tracing of effects of crises. But none of these can substitute for nationally representative household data. The most important challenge is in combining the various methods, using the strength of quantitative techniques to provide generalizable data with the strength of qualitative approaches to provide deeper insight into the meanings of poverty, and the strength of rapid appraisals to provide insights more quickly than household surveys. Part of the issue between the two approaches depends on exactly what the information is required for. Obtaining context-specific information through participatory approaches may be, at times, the best way of evaluating certain questions about poverty.

The approaches are not substitutes for each other, and therefore it remains crucial to continue to stress the need for representative data. As noted above, in the context of the wide range of new initiatives, perhaps the most important problem is the lack of trend data. Beyond the problems that this poses for policy-relevant analyses, it may also indicate the relative lack of sustained effort to monitor poverty. The initiatives described of the LSMS type, have to a large extent, been donor-driven. In many cases, this has not been accompanied by efforts to build in-country capacity and contribute to a constituency that enables sustained efforts towards poverty monitoring over time. The World Bank's 1997 Status Report is rightly concerned that in a fairly large number of countries in SSA, there are no future plans for administering surveys, and that the number of planned surveys in the region is declining. There are doubts whether there is, both among donors and within the countries concerned, sufficient constituency to enforce such sustained efforts.

How Useful Is the Existing Information for Policy?

What can policy makers do with the kind of information previously described? Particularly, how useful are the poverty profiles for targeting? There are three types of targeting: (a) Sectoral targeting; (b) Self targeting; and (c) Administered targeting (van de Walle 1998).

- **Sectoral targeting:** This targets types of spending which are relatively important to the poor without attempting to reach the poor directly as individuals. Information is required about the types of spending most relevant to the poor. Estimates of "incidences of benefits" across income deciles from different kinds of public spending are central for poverty-reducing sectoral targeting policies.

- **Self targeting**: By assuming that the poor will identify themselves, this saves on considerable information demands. However, to design the program, reliable key information is required. Self-targeting subsidies on "inferior goods" require information on consumption preferences to ensure that most non-poor will not consume the subsidized good. Improving self-targeting programs requires beneficiary evaluation, but the existence of a recent nation-wide survey contributes to adequate

poverty responses, particularly to identify the most vulnerable areas. For public works employment, often praised as an effective anti-poverty intervention (Lipton *et al.* 1998), wage data are essential for determining the correct programme wage (which should not be above the market rate, to keep the program self-targeting. Data on local wage rates are fairly easy to obtain, and do perhaps not need household surveys. But to target the programs and to evaluate the outcome of the programs which should involve a comparison with situations where the project is not implemented, survey information can be of great help.[14]

- **Administered targeting**: Many anti-poverty policies rely on administered targeting which requires detailed information on the poor. Households income can be used directly as a means of targeting. However, this is administratively difficult, and it may induce households to claim to be poorer than they actually are. Therefore, other means of administrative targeting are often preferred, i.e. using characteristics that are easily observed, not easily changed and highly correlated with poverty, such as region of residence, landholding, gender, and household size. Also a focus on such indicators, if they better reflect long-run living standards, may provide a better identification of the chronically poor. [15] The more a poverty profile is able to indicate long-term living standards, the better it will be for targeting the chronically poor. Education and land ownership may be considered as long-run welfare indicators.

Thus, poverty characteristics already discussed can be helpful, not only in the understanding of poverty, but also for policies targeting the poor. But it is important to stress that such correlates are by no means easy to identify, and can be very sensitive to definitions of poverty, and the setting of poverty lines. For example, Ravallion and Bidani (1994) show that the method used to derive the poverty line can have a large impact on the poverty profile. They show this for Indonesia and it is likely to hold in other places. According to the "cost of basic needs method" for determining the poverty line, rural poverty is substantially greater than urban poverty (as are poverty gap and poverty severity). However, using "the food energy intake method", this rural-urban ranking is reversed, for all three poverty measures. A similar re-ranking is observed when the two methods are compared for poverty across provinces and regions. Thus, careful sensitivity analysis of poverty profiles is required to see whether they are robust as to the choice of methods, assumptions and poverty lines. Ravallion and Bidani (1994: 98) state that policymakers should be wary of how underlying poverty measures have been constructed before using the derived poverty profiles to formulate poverty-reduction policies. But the reality is often that data are unavailable for the relative luxury of sensitivity analysis. Moreover, sensitivity analysis only indicates the effect of choices for different groups but choices still have to be made for practical policymaking.

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[14] Ravallion's Appraising Workfare Programs (1998) provides a relatively simple analytical tool for a rapid appraisal of workfare programs. Nevertheless, data requirements appear substantial.

[15] Much of poverty is dynamic with people repeatedly slipping into and out of poverty. This does not imply that transitory poverty is not a problem. Temporary poverty can damage capabilities in the long run. An example is when households because of temporary crises or life-cycle events, are forced to withdraw children from school, or cannot afford sufficient nutrition at early ages.

To further illustrate the point about how different methods and definitions can lead to different profiles of the poor, outcomes of recent research that compare quantitative and qualitative and participatory methods are referred to. Shaffer (1998) compares the groups identified as poor in Guinea through survey data and through a participatory assessment, and finds discrepancies between the two approaches in terms of the poverty status, particularly of women. Survey data clearly indicate that male-headed households in Guinea were poorer than female-headed households (for poverty incidence, depth and severity measures), and this was not affected by the choice of poverty line. Correspondingly, female-headed households are found to be under-represented among the poor, and even more so among the ultra-poor. Survey data also indicate that the incidence of both stunting and wasting was higher in boys than girls, and a higher percentage of men had body mass indices which put them in the ranges of "health risk" and "underweight". Figures for child mortality under-5 years indicate excess male mortality. The participatory study reveals that both men and women believed that in terms of work-load and decision-making authority, women were disadvantaged, these being elements of welfare not exposed by the survey information. In well-being ranking exercises, groups of both men and women separately ranked all but two married village women below males, and the materially poorest man in the village was ranked "better-off" than materially better-off women. This example cited illustrates that survey information may give a misleading or incomplete picture of deprivation. Basing policy entirely on survey data, may therefore be insufficient.

Comparisons of subjective poverty assessment and survey-based objective poverty assessment have been carried out for Jamaica and Nepal, based on qualitative questions on perceptions of consumption adequacy (Pradhan and Ravallion 1997). Poverty measures, and poverty rankings of regions, based on objective poverty lines have striking similarities to those based on subjective poverty lines. Both subjective and objective poverty lines address consumption adequacy only, and not other aspects of welfare. The results show that with good survey information, an objective method of estimating consumption poverty can be devised which accords quite well with what the poor consider inadequate.

The point here is not to debate which kind of poverty monitoring is better. In any case, qualitative and quantitative methods should reinforce each other. This discussion focuses on whether poverty profiles can be used for targeting anti-poverty policies. The examples illustrate that such profiles can be essential for targeting, but that they should be applied with careful recognition of how they are constructed, and their sensitivity to changes in the specification of poverty lines and/or poverty concept. Different definitions, methods and approaches can give radically different outcomes, even to the extent that rankings can be reversed, potentially leading to great targeting errors. Policies therefore, should be based on representative quantitative data, but these should be carefully analyzed, and should be supported by more contextual information and knowledge about the priorities, perceptions and needs expressed by the poor themselves.

Conclusion

Much has been written during the 1990s about poverty, the characteristics of the poor, its status in Africa and how it relates to economic growth. The main objective of this paper is to look at the underlying information that forms the basis of these debates. Poverty research (e.g. Lipton *et al.* 1998) provides clear suggestions regarding effective, cost-efficient responses to poverty. However, the successful application in a given context requires specific information on the poor in that particular country, at that particular point in time. The main argument is that too little is known about poverty, particularly in Africa, the very continent where human deprivation is worst. There are less than 20 SSA countries for which internationally comparable data are available, usually for one point in time only. This makes it very difficult to draw reasonably reliable conclusions about, for example, the link between economic growth and poverty.

This paper also investigates what poverty data are available at the national level in Africa and the Middle East, about trends in countries and characteristics of the poor, and how useful these data can be for policy makers. In terms of coverage, data on poverty are becoming increasingly available. Whereas at the beginning of the 1990s, perhaps only 10% of the population was covered by nationally representative surveys which are essential for many policy purposes, now they are available in all but a few countries. Availability is not the whole story, however. Governments and donors may still be paying insufficient attention to sustained monitoring of poverty. In many cases, surveys have been implemented only once, and have not become a regular exercise nor integrated in policy-making processes. The lack of trend data is a major hindrance for poverty analysis which may also signify that there is inadequate commitment to provide regular data.

Nationally representative expenditure surveys can usefully describe the welfare of a population. These surveys also provide information about the characteristics of the poor, which are essential for understanding poverty, as well as targeting anti-poverty policy. This paper has attempted to demonstrate how much variety there is in this respect, and that results of research are very sensitive to definitions employed. But other forms of measurement can contribute to the monitoring of poverty and identifying the poor. Health and education are often correlated with poverty, but much of the data on these issues in the region are not of high quality. Proxies of poverty, such as land ownership or rural wage rates, may also be instrumental in the continuous and timely monitoring of poverty. Finally, participatory assessments not only provide in-depth knowledge essential to understand poverty, but can also be helpful in rapidly tracing effects of sudden shocks. None of these methods are substitutes for each other. The challenge in monitoring poverty lies in an eclectic combination of various approaches.

Poverty analysis is not cost-less. Approaches to poverty analysis are neither cheap nor easy. Adequate poverty monitoring will remain contingent upon many things, including continued commitment by donors, but especially within the countries to obtain regular data on the welfare of the population. Neglecting the need for poverty information may lead to higher costs later and to policy mistakes and inefficiency.

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APPENDIX TABLE A. Poverty in African and Middle Eastern Countries

			$1 /day poverty				HCI, national poverty line				Relative poverty				Inequality	
	GNP/cap PPP 1995	GNP/cap % gwth 85-95	Year Survey	HCI	PGI	GDP/cap PPP Svy yr	Year Survey	National	Rural	Urban	Year Survey	National	Rural	Urban	Year Survey	Average Gini
Sub-Saharan Africa																
Burkina Faso	780	-0.2									1995	56	65	13		
Benin	1760	-0.3					1995	33.0								
Botswa-na	5580	6.1	85-86	34.7	13.3	2337									1986	54.2
Burundi	630	-1.3					1990	36.2								
Cameroon	2110	-6.6					1984	40.0	32.4	44.4					1983	49
CAR	1070	-2.4									1993	61	77	33	1992	55.0
Côte d'Ivoire	1580	-4.1	1988	17.7	4.3	1419	Early 90s		77	23	1995	40	49	31	85-88	39.2
Ethiopia	450	-0.3	81-2	33.8	8.0	322										
Eritrea							(93-4)	(53)								
Gabon		-8.2													75-77	61.2
The Gambia	930	-1.1					1992	64.0			1992	49	73	21		
Ghana	1990	1.4					1992	31.4	34.3	26.7	1993	39	45	26	88-92	35.1
Guinea		1.4	1991	26.3	12.4	763					94-95	52	52	51		
Guinea-Bissau	790	2.0	1991	87.0	57.8	593	1991	48.8	60.9	24.1	1991	54	65	29	1991	56.1
Kenya	1380	0.1	1992	50.2	22.2	914	1992	46.4	46.4	29.3	92-93	61	69	12	1992	54.4
Lesotho	1780	1.2	86-87	50.4	24.8	928	1993	49.2	53.9	27.8					1987	56.0
Madagascar	640	-2.2	1993	72.3	33.2	579	Early 90s		37	44	1993	51	59	21	1990	43.4
Malawi	750	-0.7					Early 90s		63	10						
Mali	550	0.8					Early 90s			50						
Mauritania	1540	0.5	1988	31.4	15.2	788	1990	57.0							1988	42.5

Mauritius	**13210**	**5.4**					**1992**	**10.6**							**80-91**	**40.7**
Mozambique	**810**	**3.6**														
Niger	**750**		**1992**	**61.5**	**22.2**	**420**					**1993**	**38**	**43**	**14**	**1992**	**36.1**
Nigeria	**1220**	**1.2**	**92-93**	**28.9**	**11.7**	**978**	**92-93**	**34.1**	**36.4**	**30.4**	**1992**	**44**	**52**	**32**	**86-92**	**38.6**
Rwanda	**540**	**-5.4**	**83-85**	**45.7**	**11.3**	**769**	**1993**	**51.2**							**1983**	**28.9**
Senegal	**1780**	**-0.7**	**91-92**	**54.0**	**25.5**	**1120**					**1991**	**55**	**78**	**21**	**1991**	**54.1**
Seychelles															**78-84**	**46.5**
Sierra Leone	**580**	**-3.6**									**89/90**	**56**	**74**	**36**	**1968**	**60.8**
South Africa	**5030**	**-1.6**	**1993**	**23.7**	**6.6**	**2954**					**1993**	**63**	**82**	**41**	**1992**	**62.3**
Sudan															**1971**	**38.7**
Tanzania	**640**	**1.0**	**1993**	**16.4**	**3.7**	**518**	**1991**	**51.1**			**1993**	**42**	**52**	**20**	**69-93**	**40.4**
Togo	**1130**	**-2.7**					**87-89**	**32.3**								
Uganda	**1470**	**2.7**	**89-90**	**50.0**	**14.7**	**548**	**1993**	**55.0**			**1993**	**42**	**46**	**16**	**89-92**	**36.9**
Zaire							**Early 90s**		**76**	**32**						
Zambia	**930**	**-0.8**	**1993**	**84.6**	**53.8**	**709**	**1993**	**86.0**			**1993**	**52**	**75**	**16**	**76-91**	**47.3**
Zimbabwe	**2030**	**-0.6**	**90-91**	**41.0**	**14.3**	**1182**	**90-91**	**25.5**							**1990**	**56.8**
Middle East & North Africa																
Algeria			**1995**	**< 2**	**-**		**1995**	**22.6**	**30.3**	**14.7**					**1988**	**38.7**
Egypt			**90-91**	**7.6**	**1.1**			**-**							**59-91**	**38.0**
Iran				**-**				**-**							**69-84**	**43.2**
Jordan			**1992**	**2.5**	**0.5**		**1991**	**15.0**							**80-91**	**39.2**
Morocco			**90-91**	**< 2**			**90-91**	**13.1**	**18.0**	**7.6**					**84-91**	**39.2**
Tunisia			**1990**	**3.9**	**0.9**		**1990**	**14.1**	**21.0**	**8.9**					**65-90**	**42.5**

HCI – Head Count Index
PGI – Poverty Gap Index

Sources: World Development Report (1997): GNP/capita and growth.
Ravallion (1996): $/day poverty and GDP/capita at survey year (in PPP, 1985 prices).
Ravallion (1996): National poverty line data, except Eritrea (from World Bank Poverty Assessment)
Cleaver and Donovan (1995): Those marked with 'early 90s' as the survey year.
van Holst Pellekaan and Hartnett (1997): Relative poverty data.
Deininger and Squire (1996): Gini data

APPENDIX TABLE B. Trends in Poverty during the 1980s and 1990s (Population Below the Poverty Line)

	Year	National poverty		Rural poverty	Urban poverty
		Moderate-P0	Extreme P0	Moderate P0	Moderate P0
Sub-Saharan Africa					
Cote d'Ivoire	1985 1988	30 45.9			
Ethiopia	1989 1994 1995			61.3 49.6 / 33.3 45.3	
Ghana	1988 1992	36.9 31.4	10.2 6.0	42 34	
Kenya	81/82 1992	(51.5) 46.4 (48.7)		47.9 46.4	 29.3
Nigeria	1985 1992	43 34.1	12.0 13.6	 36	 30
Tanzania	1983 1991	64.6 50.5			
Sudan	1978 1990	38 72			
North Africa and Middle East					
Jordan	86/87 1992				
Morocco	1970 1985	42 30	42 30		
Tunisia	1985 1990				
Egypt	1981/2 1995/6			26.8 50.2	33.5 45.0

Sources: Jayarajah *et al.* (1996): National data for: Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, and rural data for: Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania.

Cleaver and Donovan (1995): Cote d'Ivoire (rural & urban), Ghana (rural & urban), Kenya (rural & urban), Nigeria (rural & urban), Tanzania (rural & urban).

Demery and Squire (1996): Cote d'Ivoire (national), Ethiopia, Kenya (in brackets), Tanzania.

Dercon and Krishnan (1998): Ethiopia - the two figures are the results of two different rounds with the second one held at the beginning of the harvest when food is relatively plentiful.

Hassan (1997): Panel data for 351 households in Sudan:, but questions exist regarding the quality of these data.

Morrison (1991): Morocco but poverty line is not specified.

El-laithy(1998): Egypt. However, another source, i.e. Datt *et al.* (1998) calculates poverty incidence in 1997 to be 26.5 %