



# POVERTY AND GENDER IN THE PHILIPPINES

A report on qualitative research conducted as part of *Assessing Development: designing better indices for poverty and gender equity*, an international research collaboration to develop a gender-sensitive measure of poverty that reflects the views of poor men and women.

Fatima Alvarez Castillo  
With comments from  
Nimfa Bracamonte  
Erlinda (Caster) Palaganas  
Cora Anonuevo

July 2011

An Australian Research Council Linkage Grant, administered by the Australian National University in partnership with International Women's Development Agency, Oxfam Great Britain (Southern Africa), the Philippine Health Social Science Association, the University of Colorado at Boulder and Oxfam America

## **FEMPOV PHASE 1 FIELD WORK**

### **Philippines National Report**

By Fatima Alvarez Castillo  
With comments from  
Nimfa Bracamonte  
Erlinda (Caster) Palaganas  
Cora Anonuevo

July 25, 2011

## Contents

<b>METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>3</b>
About the researchers: our shared value orientation .....	3
Methodology .....	4
Validation .....	9
Triangulation .....	10
Reflexivity .....	10
Ethics.....	11
<b>DISCUSSION: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CASES</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Context of poverty.....	12
Dimensions/constituents of poverty .....	15
Poverty and hardships .....	17
Opportunities for improving one’s life circumstances.....	19
Levels of poverty.....	20
Movement in the ladder of poverty.....	22
What is needed to get out of poverty .....	22
Distribution of poverty in the household.....	23
<b>CONCLUSIONS</b> .....	<b>24</b>
Key issues for the field work .....	24
Categories of poverty .....	25
Dimensions of poverty.....	27
Absolute vs relative poverty.....	28
Access to vs. control over resources and opportunities .....	29
Consumption vs. assets .....	29
Inputs vs. outcomes .....	29
Specific needs of particular individuals .....	30
Length and quality of necessary work to obtain resources.....	30
Thematic and conceptual conclusions.....	30

This report integrates the findings from three case studies conducted in the Philippines: Tondo, Bajau and Paracelis. It identifies common findings as well as particularities in each study site. It seeks to show how context differentiates poverty and also how poverty in many ways makes life similar for all poor people.

The first part discusses the methodology. This is followed by discussion of research findings and finally we offer some conclusions.

### *Writing the national report*

In preparing the national report, the following steps were conducted: (a) each case study report was analyzed, from the methodology to the conclusions; (b) findings were grouped into specific topics or themes; (c) quotes that illuminated key points copied; (d) findings and analytic themes were compared and contrasted across the three case studies; and (e) general and specific themes emerging from the cases were identified for an integrated, comparative analysis. The draft of the national report was circulated to the case study lead researchers.

### *Writing the case study report*

Each of the three case study reports can stand alone – it is complete. Each site team chose their own style of reporting, but all include adequate presentation of the methodology, findings and discussion.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **About the researchers: our shared value orientation**

We believe that the value position of the researcher influences her/his appreciation of what is significant, of what is suggested by or what can be inferred from the data – in other words, the possible meanings and value of the data. That is why we state our value orientation at the outset.

The researchers in the Philippine team are all active in advocacy and projects for social justice. We work directly with under-served and impoverished communities as volunteers. Each senior researcher is also an academic - straddling academia and social activism.

We see inequity in power as a fundamental cause of inequity in resource distribution, access to public resources and in political voice. We believe that gender is a direct determinant of power inequity.

As researchers we believe that we have an obligation to utilize our work in the service of those people who are victimized by socially determined inequities. At the same time we do not believe that haphazard work, sloppy research or weak science will benefit those

we seek to support as it will not help us to see the real situation – to “diagnose” correctly the problem in order to make appropriate interventions.

Making explicit one’s political orientation is essential in qualitative research because the researcher and the data have intensive interaction, especially in data analysis. The degree of intervention by the researcher in data analysis is greater in qualitative than in quantitative research. In qualitative research, the researcher deploys her/his analytic lens in making sense of the data to themselves and to others. Our discussion of our methodology below will show how this is so.

## **Methodology**

All the case studies used the same methodology. What differed was each individual team’s analysis; although these differences are levelled off through triangulation by the researchers. This will be discussed in a later section of this report.

### ***Case study design***

Like the other country studies in this project, the methodological design used is a case study approach. The areas in which case studies were conducted in the Philippines are the Tondo, Paracelis and Bajau communities. Case studies involve in-depth and holistic examination of a specific case – this could be a phenomenon, a program, or as in our study, a community.

Case studies are inductive ways of theory-building. The case study design is appropriate because the questions require in-depth examination of patterns and processes in particular contexts. Findings from case studies are not generalizable or transferable but they can generate hypotheses that can be tested or further explored.

It enables the researchers to “grasp the particulars in their historical context in order to say something about the human condition in general” for a “nuanced appreciation of the diverse social and political factors involved”.<sup>1</sup> The idea was to see the underlying coherence in the myriad of details.

### ***Sampling of cases***

The cases were chosen using the criterion sampling technique – cases are chosen based on a sampling framework that aims to capture differences in context among poor communities. The assumption is that context significantly differentiates experiences of, and personal views on poverty. Therefore, we selected cases to represent the three different social contexts being investigated in each of the six countries involved in the research: rural (Paracelis), urban (Tondo) and highly marginalized (Bajau). The individual case study reports describe in detail how the sites were selected.

---

<sup>1</sup> Desjarleis R and A Kleinman. 1997. Violence and Wellbeing. Social Science & Medicine. 45(8).

### *Sampling of participants*

In qualitative research, the experience and views of the research participants constitute the bulk of the data being collected and analyzed.<sup>2</sup> Criterion sampling was used in the selection of participants for each case study. The key criteria used for selecting participants were gender and age. Participants were categorized into the age groups of young, middle aged and older aged, and these groups were further divided into male and female participants. This was conducted on the assumption that there are significant differences in experiences, views and contexts of individuals in specific groups that represent a diversity of social locations.

### *Theoretical sampling*

During the data gathering phase, respondents who were not in the initial list were interviewed using theoretical sampling which is a method of selecting respondents that is guided by emerging themes or analytic constructs.<sup>3</sup> They were identified by using a snowball sampling technique. This involves identifying subsequent potential respondents by asking previous respondents for persons who may be able to provide the data and by obtaining names from field or project reports.

### *Grounded theory*

The fieldwork methodology in each case study was grounded theory. This means employing a minimum level of assumptions in field research. The idea is to listen first to the perspectives emerging from participants and then form opinions and analytic constructs based on these responses.

Grounded theory research collects a mass of details that are close to the ground and then moves to conceptualization. The process of movement from raw data to concepts should be transparent. Transparency here refers to the detailed description by the researcher of the steps and process of moving from raw data to conceptualization.

Consequently, grounded theory research reports contain huge amounts of details in the presentation of findings. This is an important strength of qualitative research – the richness in details at the fingertips of the researcher to draw inferences, insights and to contextualize the data. We show webs of interlocking details to provide texture and develop in the reader a sense of being close to the realities we are describing. That is why qualitative research reports are usually lengthy and detailed.

This transparency is a part of scientific rigor and ethics and provides the readers with as much detail as reasonable to allow them to make their own interpretations and to illustrate the process with which the researchers have developed analysis and conclusions from the raw data. This enhances the trustworthiness of the analysis and conclusions.

---

<sup>2</sup> Neuman W L. 1994. *Social Research Methods*. Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon

<sup>3</sup> Rubin H and I Rubin. 1995. *Qualitative Interviewing: the art of hearing data*. London: Sage.

As the report moves from findings, which are detailed, to discussion and analysis, details give way to abstraction and conceptualization. Details are organized using conceptual frames and themes emerging from the findings; there is less reporting of findings and more analysis of the findings. There is attention to the nuances of data, and their interconnections. With transparency, the readers join the journey of constructing knowledge.

Analysis refers to the process of assigning significance to data and drawing inferences and insights from the key themes presented in data. That is why it is essential that the report is transparent about the process as it involves intervention by the researcher in making sense of the data. The degree of intervention increases as the process moves from identifying the findings (mostly selecting, extracting and organizing data) to discussion (comparative analysis of data) and finally to conclusions (analytic constructs are presented that serve as concluding remarks).

### *Data collection*

Each case study site report provides a description of the data collection process employed. These involved essentially the same techniques as used for the other country studies, which were fully detailed in a common field guide developed collaboratively with input from the core research team and field researchers in five of the six countries involved in the research.<sup>4</sup>

### *Data analysis*

Each team used three levels of analysis: (a) case analysis; (b) cross case analysis; and (c) macro / integrated case study analysis. The comparative and integrated analyses of the three case studies were undertaken for this national report.

A case analysis within a case study refers to analysis of a particular data source (eg FGD of boys). The process of doing a case analysis involves knowing what data come from the data source in relation to a particular set of questions. For example, knowing what data comes from the boys on the questions on dimensions of poverty. Thus if there were six groups who had four group sessions, that means a total of 24 case analysis. The idea is to identify the knowledge specific to the group or respondent.

Cross-case analysis refers to the process of comparing data from different groups on the same set of questions using the findings from the various case analyses. For example, cross-case analysis was done with all the case analysis outcomes on the group sessions with the boys. Cross-case analysis was then conducted on all the case

---

<sup>4</sup> The research was delayed by some months in Africa and field researchers were not able to participate in the initial methodology workshop that informed development of the field guide. A separate methodology workshop in Africa was subsequently facilitated by one of the Principal Investigators and a member of the project research staff, presenting the field guide and adjusting as required for localization.

analysis on all the groups and all the group sessions. The idea was to see both patterns and particularities emerging from each case as well as across all three case studies. What follows is a description of the process we undertook to analyze the data.

### *Coding*

To do a case analysis, verbatim transcription of each participant interview and group session was conducted. The transcription provides the material for coding which is the process of extracting relevant data and organizing these in ways that will enable the researcher to see data sets, themes, and issues. While coding, the researcher is also able to form insights about the questions being addressed by the research.

Several things happen while coding:

- Giving attention to details
- Letting the data speak to you and see what they suggest
- Seeing the links between details and the big picture emerging
- Being alert to gaps in data.

While there could be some small variations among researchers, the following steps were followed when coding:

- Researcher reads the transcript
- S/he marks data in the transcript s/he thinks are relevant (could be colouring or underscoring or encircling)
- S/he writes on the margin what s/he thinks is the topic to which the marked data correspond
- S/he copies in a coding matrix all the data extracted under the topic s/he initially assigned
- S/he notes initial thoughts/insights/remarks/comments that will help her/him to later make sense of the data.

What is accomplished are the following: (a) relevant data is identified, extracted and classified by topic; (b) a list of topics that describe the data contained in the material is made; and (c) tentative insights which could form the basis of thematic or conceptual analysis are made available. The classification of data and the list of topics we devised changed as we moved between data and coding (re-ordering the coding hierarchy). Thus for example, data that appeared at the outset as a general topic turned out to be a specific topic under a much larger theme or data that was classified under a particular topic was reclassified to another topic. This happened as in the process of immersing ourselves in the data, we gained a better grasp of the significance of and linkages between data sets.

### *Coding matrix*

A coding matrix was constructed for each case analysis. When all cases have been coded, we used the coding matrices to identify patterns, common findings and issues,

as well as differences between and unique aspects of particular cases. We then constructed a macro coding matrix to be applied across all three case studies.

The matrix was filled when coding of the material was completed. Below is an example of a part of a coding matrix that was constructed for the boys /male youth on issues 2 and 3. We decided to distinguish the etic views (researchers') from the participants' views (emic). Below is an example. In the first column are the topics or categories which we used to classify the data. In the third column are selected quotes that we think capture the sense of the data. The page where the quote is found in the material is provided to enable us to quickly locate it when needed.

The use of quotes gives a sense of reality, enhances the credibility of our interpretation and enables the reader to make her/his own reading, interpretation and appreciation of the data.

### Coding Boys / Male Youth Issues 2 & 3

CODING: BOYS, Issues #2 and # 3			
Categories/ Subcategories (Etic: Researcher)	Data (from emic perspective: Participants)	Sample Quotes (emic)	Comments/Qs (Etic/Memos)
Description of the poor			
Job security	In terms of jobs, the poor do not have permanent secure jobs.  Another participant mentioned that he is poor for he has worked before but now has stopped	“Contractual... <i>hindi permanente</i> ”.  “ <i>Mahirap po (ako) kasi minsan na rin akong nagtrabaho, pero natigil na rin akong nagtrabaho</i> ”	Relate to lack of education and the young
Clothing	Their usual clothing are those worn by scavengers: boots and a long-sleeved shirt.	Simple... <i>mga damit ng namamasura, ung nakabotas...long sleeves</i> <i>-mahirap din pero hindi katulad ng mga tagalooban</i>	When worn by scavengers in the community, this distinguishes poor from non-poor?
Smell	Smell of garbage distinguishes poor from not poor	<i>pero walang amoy ng basura (ang mayayaman)</i>	
Food sufficiency	Food insufficiency for the poor;	<i>-hindi mayaman pero may sapat na pera?</i> Next item ito	
Money	The poor do not have money or items like cell phones, TV, or slippers, because they cannot	“ <i>Hindi kumpleto ang gamit.</i> ”	

Material possessions	<p>afford them.</p> <p>They spend money on more important items like food.</p> <p>in contrast, they described the rich people as having cell phones, slippers, a car</p> <p>One participant in the group has a cell phone but he said he still considers himself poor.</p>	<p><i>(ang mayaman) ung matanda hindi niya hilig ang cellphone kaya (kaya wala siya pero ang mahirap) gusto niya ng cellphone pero wala siyang pera (p. 5)</i></p> <p><i>(mahalagang paggastusan) ang pagkain (p. 6)</i></p> <p>'R': <i>may kaya ang may tsinelas (p6)</i>  <i>-natural lang mag-tsinelas</i></p>	Choice? Concept to distinguish poor from non-poor?
----------------------	--	---	---

Coding encourages reflection on the relevance and importance of the data. Seeing the significance and putting it in the matrix is the next level of data analysis after extracting and organizing the data.

The last column records the questions and remarks of the researchers provoked by the data. These are the questions we pose to ourselves as we deal with some specific data, or reminders to pursue an angle that the data suggest, or any other thought that should be noted for taking up later. Note-taking is an integral part of conceptual development in data analysis.

It was not possible to analyze our data without being familiar with it first. We read every transcription several times to develop in-depth analysis.

While the use of a computer program would have made the coding process quicker, the Philippine teams agreed to do manual coding even though this is an intensive process. This decision was made in the belief that this process would give us a firmer grip or handle on the data.

## Validation

Several steps were taken to validate the data.

- Each country team took the findings of the study to respondents who were available at the time, for validation.
- 10 per cent of coded transcriptions were randomly selected and exchanged among the researchers in the team; each researcher reviewed the coding and when there were disagreements on the coding, these were resolved through discussions – this is a form of inter-researcher validation
- Inter-researcher validation was also done in team meetings where we discussed our coding matrices.

Some explanations ought to be made regarding validation procedures in qualitative studies like this one. Indicators for validity in qualitative study reports are different from those in quantitative studies.<sup>5</sup> Credibility of interpretation in qualitative studies is seen in the transparency, consistency-coherence and communicability of the study.<sup>6</sup>

Firstly, as discussed earlier in this section, it is part of transparency to provide the detailed findings in the report. Furthermore, the methodology is explained in a detailed fashion.

Secondly, gathering data from different data sources, which by itself is a process of triangulation (triangulation by data source), enabled the researchers to check inconsistencies. However, not all contradictory data are invalid. In qualitative research, contradictory information could actually be significant in itself. The idea is to explain why this is so. What is of importance is that core concepts and themes consistently occur in all cases. In other words, there is coherence and internal logic in the analysis.<sup>7</sup>

Thirdly, the idea of communicability in qualitative research reporting is that a report is credible when it feels real to the reader.<sup>8</sup> Findings in the report complement what other researchers know or have observed. "The richness in detail, abundance of evidence, and vividness of the text help convince those who have not been in the field that this material is real."<sup>9</sup>

## Triangulation

Triangulation in social research involves examining the question from different vantage points.<sup>10</sup> In this study, we triangulated data in several ways: (a) by gathering data from participants who are from different population groups, experiences and backgrounds; (b) use of different data gathering techniques; and (c) we compared our analysis as described above and in the Paracelis, Tondo and Bajau reports.

## Reflexivity

All the members of the case study team reflected on their experiences during the entire research process. These reflections are included in their reports. This is a part of the transparency requirement in qualitative research and enhances the truthfulness and trustworthiness of the results.

---

<sup>5</sup> Oakley A. 1992. *Social Support and Motherhood: natural history of a research project*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

<sup>6</sup> Rubin H and I Rubin. 1995. *Qualitative Interviewing: the art of hearing data*. London: Sage.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Neuman W L. 1994. *Social Research Methods*. Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon

## Ethics

The ethical procedures undertaken by each study team are described in their respective site reports. We see this in the reflexivity writings where they express their thoughts and concerns regarding ethical issues raised by the study. This was especially true for the researchers conducting the case study with the most marginalized group, the Bajau. The researchers for this group had to deal with anxiety and feelings of inadequacy about their capacity to help the people, among others. This is understandable given the terrible situation and deprivations that they saw. They have taken some concrete steps such as pooling their personal funds to help the community get a water connection; starting adult education classes; and lobbying the city government to recognize the community's right to security of domain. If you have read the Bajau report, you will probably sympathize with the psychological and ethical difficulties experienced by our colleagues in Iligan.

The next thing to ask is: does the FemPov project have any other responsibility, aside from paying participants their participant fee (to value and acknowledge their time) or serving snacks for example? In response to this question, we take up the point of 'relief of oppression' in the following section.

### *Relief of oppression*

The Majengo women engaged in sex work in Nairobi, Kenya, have been the subject of study relevant to genetics in HIV AIDS.<sup>11</sup> Recent international discussions about the sharing of benefits from research and the obligations of researchers to their research participants in poor societies have been triggered by a study on these women. One article was written that proposed the principle of "relief of oppression."<sup>12</sup>

The key question raised in this article is what are the obligations of researchers in international research that respects the principle of justice? We quote extensively from the abstract of the article:

*A central question in the debate about exploitation in international research is whether investigators and sponsors from high-income countries (HIC) have obligations to address background conditions of injustice in the communities in which they conduct their research, beyond the healthcare and other research-related needs of participants, to aspects of their basic life circumstances...Relief of oppression aims to help observational researchers working in conditions of injustice and deprivation to clarify their ethical obligations to participants. It aims to bridge the gap between a narrow, transaction-oriented account of avoiding exploitation and a broad account emphasizing*

---

<sup>11</sup> Tim Castillo was the gender oversight person in a project that examined benefit sharing issues in genetic research. One of his case studies was the Majengo women who were being studied at that time by a group of Kenyan and Canadian researchers. Tim met several of the women and learned that they were satisfied with the health care and education that the genetics study was providing as the benefits for their participation. The reports on these case studies are available at: [http://www.uclan.ac.uk/schools/school\\_of\\_health/research\\_projects/project\\_outputs.php](http://www.uclan.ac.uk/schools/school_of_health/research_projects/project_outputs.php)

<sup>12</sup> Lavery JV, Bandewar SV, Kimani J, Upshur RE, Plummer FA, Singer PA. 'Relief of oppression': an organizing principle for researchers' obligations to participants in observational studies in the developing world. Available at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20591194> Accessed Feb 2011

*obligations of reparation for historic injustices. We propose that relief of oppression might focus researchers' consideration of benefits on those that have some relevance to background conditions of injustice, and so elevate the priority of these benefits, in relation to others that might be considered and negotiated with participants, according to the degree to which the participating communities are constrained in their realization of fundamental freedoms.*

We propose that the FemPov project reflects on the issue raised here, which to our mind is a vital and ethically urgent question.

## **DISCUSSION: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THREE CASE SITES**

In this section, we make a comparative analysis of the findings in the three case studies: rural (Paracelis), urban poor (Tondo) and highly marginalized (Bajau). The comparative analysis is structured along the following six issues: (1) context of poverty; (2) dimensions/constituents of poverty; (3) hardships that are poverty-related and unrelated to poverty; (4) levels of poverty; (5) what is needed to get out of poverty; and (6) distribution of poverty in the household. Commonalities as well as differences among the three cases are identified.

### **Context of poverty**

#### ***Urban cases***

There are significant similarities in the two urban poor communities, Tondo and Bajau. Both are communities of squatters and therefore non-legal residents facing the threat of eviction or forced relocation. Neither community has security of tenure. However there are features that distinguish one from the other. While both are stigmatized as squatters, the Tondo community is further stigmatized as garbage scavengers. The Bajau community is also further stigmatized because they are Bajau, beggars and migrants, and frequently stereotyped as 'dirty.'

### **Comparison of features of three cases**

We now compare the contextual features of the urban and rural cases.

#### ***Livelihood***

While the Paracelis community can be said to have an independent livelihood (from farming), virtually all of the Bajau community is almost totally dependent on begging. Figure 1 below provides a visual representation of these differences.

*Figure 1. Spectrum of independent livelihood*



The Bajau beggars have the most dependent livelihood which means that they have virtually no control over it. They are dependent on the behaviour of people who are potential sources of coins or food. The Tondo scavenging section of the community, while dependent on the garbage that is brought daily, has some degree of independence in that they can select, classify and sell their goods. Toward the other end of the spectrum, the Paracelis farmers, especially those who own the land they till, exercise relatively greater control over their livelihood compared to the other two cases.

However, within the Paracelis community, the farmers without farmland are less independent, are poorer and more vulnerable to hunger than those with farmland because they are mainly dependent on their labour and the availability of paid work on other farms.

**Table 1. Comparison of the poverty situation within sites**

Tondo		Bajau	Paracelis	
Scavengers	Charcoal makers		With farmland	Without farmland
Less poor than charcoal makers	Poorer than scavengers	Beggars are poorer than the ones engaged in vending	Less poor than landless farmers	Poorer than farmland owners

***Were different times considered better than others?***

In all three cases, there were times considered better than others in terms of life circumstances and deprivation, and these were strongly linked with livelihood. In both the Tondo and Bajau communities, those times considered better were in December or holiday periods. In Tondo, this was because there was more garbage that could be scavenged during these periods. In Bajau, this was due to the fact that the people the Bajau depend on for income (from begging) tend to be more generous during these times.

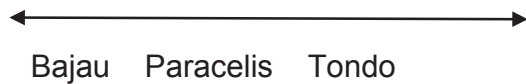
In Paracelis, harvest time was considered a more prosperous time as during these periods there was more food and money available. Lean times were considered those times in between planting and harvest, and those during the typhoon season.

***Political voice***

Participants in all three case sites are politically marginalized, the clearest indicator of which is the continued neglect by government of their urgent needs. We can see, however, relative differences in the degree of political voicelessness with the Bajau being the most politically powerless. Aside from government neglect, they are not recognized as citizens, deprived of the basic right of suffrage, and therefore of no importance to politicians during election periods. On the other hand, the Tondo community is able to organize themselves and, though in very limited ways, to represent themselves at times of crisis such as during a collective resistance against eviction. They are also important to politicians in their electoral interests.

The farmers in Paracelis recognize the value of organizing themselves for improving their economic situation. At the time of the field work, however, no such organization had been set up.

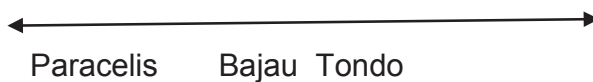
Figure 2. Comparative political voicelessness



### *Male political voice*

In Paracelis, the men virtually monopolize the community's political voice in representation with government agencies. In Tondo many of the officers of the community organizations and many of the gatekeepers are women. In the Bajau community, both men and women are gatekeepers. In fact, the most respected Bajau who helped our research team is the widow of the former informal leader of the settlement.

Figure 3. Female voice in political representation



### *Quality and adequacy of basic services*

In all three sites, basic public services are of poor quality, are inadequate and unaffordable to most people. However, there are differences in degree of lack and quality of basic services in each community. The Bajau have the least access to basic services as there is no electricity, water is unaffordable and all types of refuse litter their settlement. The fee to use the toilet is unaffordable.

In Tondo, while some families can afford water and limited electricity, the public toilets are inadequate and the roads become muddy when it rains. While public schools charge no tuition fees, children drop out due to unaffordable school projects.

In Paracelis, there are no good farm-to-market roads and electricity is very limited. In this community, we see differences in access to basic services between families in remote *sitios* and those in accessible *sitios*, the former with less access, not only to electricity and roads but also to schools.

Among the three cases the Bajau have the least access to quality and affordable public services.

## Dimensions/constituents of poverty

A dimension of poverty that is common across all three sites is the serious lack of basic necessities for daily sustenance, primarily food and shelter. Also commonly found is the dimension of insecurity of livelihood. In both the Tondo and Bajau cases, the poor are characterized as those who have no regular income – chronic uncertainty about the availability of money with which to buy food occurs on a daily basis for instance.

There is a qualitative difference however between the urban and rural cases on the matter of insecurity of livelihood and therefore of income. This difference is brought about by the difference in the nature of their livelihood. In Paracelis, because the livelihood is mainly farming, for the farmland owners it is the inadequacy of farm production and the low prices of produce, whereas for the landless farmers, it is the uncertainty of available employment and their ability to sell their labour for hire.

Therefore, among the urban case, it is primarily the absence of income from secure livelihood; while in the rural case, it is inadequacy of income and/or inadequacy of income plus uncertainty of work.

Lack of schooling is another common dimension of poverty found across all three sites.

Lack of schooling and knowledge renders the poor incapable of doing certain things. The Tondo and Bajau people cannot get regular jobs because they do not have the knowledge and skills gained through education and schooling. The Bajau case is further compounded as they are illiterate and therefore cannot even be hired for jobs that require rudimentary or functional literacy such as counting.

In the case of the Paracelis farmers, it is lack of farm land and a *carabao* for the landless. For farm owners, they cannot increase their production due to lack of knowledge and skills in modern farming. Combined with the low prices of their produce, they cannot pay off their debts which pile up and trap them in indebtedness.

Let us take up schooling as a way of further distinguishing the cases from each other. In Tondo, lack of schooling is due to lack of money for a more fundamental need - food, while in the Bajau community it is lack of money plus hunger – children cannot stay in school because they are hungry. In the Paracelis community, it is lack of money plus poor access to schools due to the absence of good roads for those in remote *sitios*.

### *Dimension of poverty specific to cases*

The Paracelis farmers see government neglect as a dimension of poverty and this is because they are poor and therefore powerless or without political influence. The abusive treatment by the government and by major ethnic groups of the Bajau is a dimension of poverty, while the male youth in Tondo consider the smell of garbage that hangs about them as a dimension of poverty.

**Table 2. Dimensions of poverty: comparison of cases**

Dimensions of poverty	Tondo	Bajau	Paracelis	
Similarities				
Basic daily needs	Lack in food, shelter	Lack in food, shelter	Lack in food, shelter	
Differences			Farm owners	Landless
Income/ livelihood	Uncertain and inadequate income/ livelihood	Uncertain and inadequate income/ livelihood	Inadequate production, low prices of produce	Lack in assets for farming (land, <i>carabao</i> ), Inadequate income and uncertain work for hire
Schooling	Lack in money for schooling	Lack in money for schooling and hunger	Accessible <i>sitios</i>	Remote <i>sitios</i>
			Lack in money for schooling	Lack in money for schooling plus absence of good roads
Differences specific to case	Smell of garbage	Ethnic discrimination	Government neglect	

### ***Specificities by gender***

In all three cases, there is an additional dimension of poverty by gender. The lack of capability to take care of the welfare of family members is a specific dimension of poverty for women given their traditional role as family welfare providers and carers. A good example of this is the Bajau women suffering the cry of their babies from hunger.

For men, who are socially defined as the main family providers, their lack of capability to ensure food for their family is a dimension of poverty specific to them. For both men and women, the failure to do their socially defined primary role is a dimension of poverty that is gender-based.

### ***Specificity by age***

In all three cases there is an additional dimension of poverty for older people – lack of support (from children usually) was a factor in their dependent status.

### ***Specificity due to combination of age and gender***

In all three cases, teenage boys suffer the added dimension of working at an early age to support their family. In all the cases, we see data about boys dropping out from

school to earn a living. Being denied their childhood due to becoming child labourers is a dimension specific to boys.

## Poverty and hardships

Participants were asked whether there were significant hardships they faced that they considered were not poverty-related, to assist in determining how poverty should be defined and measured. Common across the cases is the view that there are major hardships that are not poverty related, however most hardships are due to poverty. There are differences among the three cases in what those hardships are that are not poverty-related. For example, while vices and domestic conflict were identified as hardships that are not poverty-related in Tondo and Paracelis, these hardships were not named in Bajau.

### *Hardships that are both poverty-related and unrelated*

Typhoons and drought came out in the Paracelis data but these are not cited in either of the two other cases. Weather disturbances are of a mixed nature. Depending on the context, drought for example could be poverty related in the sense that if farmers have the capability to irrigate their farms the impact of the drought could be mitigated. Nonetheless, it is obviously something that could affect all sorts of farmers, rich and poor; the difference is in the degree of severity of impact due to differences in degree of capability for protection.

These weather disturbances are hardships that primarily impact livelihood in Paracelis. In the Bajau case, typhoons and flood are major hardships that directly threaten life because of where they live (a danger zone) and the fragility of their shelter. In this context, these are hardships that are clearly poverty-related and indicative of the level of their marginality, however they were not named as such by participants.

### *Hardships that are poverty-related*

Common to both urban communities is lack of regular income/livelihood as a major hardship that is related to poverty. Particular to Paracelis is being at the mercy of suppliers/creditors and middlemen, indebtedness and lack of things essential for farming such as *carabao*, land, roads and vehicles for transporting produce. Particular to the Bajau is abusive treatment by other ethnic groups.

Table 3 below summarizes the findings.

**Table 3. Poverty and hardships: comparative data**

	Tondo	Bajau	Paracelis
Hardships identified by participants as not poverty-related	Vices Domestic conflict	Ethnic discrimination	Vices Domestic conflict Many children Typhoon, drought
Hardships that are poverty-related			
Income/livelihood	Lack of regular & adequate income/livelihood	Lack of regular & adequate income/livelihood	Inadequate income from livelihood; lack of things essential for farming (land, <i>carabao</i> , vehicle)
Basic services	Lack /absence of affordable, quality basic services (water, electricity, good roads, public toilet, secure shelter)	Lack /absence of affordable, quality basic services (water, electricity, public toilet, secure shelter)	Lack of quality public services (good roads, buying station, technical help from government agencies)
Other hardships	Poor quality of environment (living in the garbage dump)	Begging	Control of middlemen, suppliers; Chronic indebtedness

### *Specificities by gender*

#### Impact of vices on women

In two case sites, Tondo and Paracelis, vices were cited as a major hardship that is not poverty-related and women suffer more because of this hardship. Where men have vices that deplete already inadequate incomes, this can impact women directly and severely. As women are often the ones in charge of food and other daily family needs, they are further burdened by the need to look for other ways so that the children can eat or go to school.

### *Stigma for men*

In the Bajau case, men suffered stigma when they begged as physically they look able and, because they are men. That is why it is the women, older people and the children who beg on the streets. The men and boys beg by diving for coins that are thrown into the sea by people who are entertained by watching those men and boys swim after the coins.

### *Multiple burdens of women*

The multiple burdens faced by women as a hardship specific to women is exemplified in the Bajau case. Women often have to beg at the same time as taking care of their babies and also having to do household chores.

### Specificity by age

Older people in all the case sites experience hardship when they do not get regular or adequate support from their children. The hardship most specific to young boys, is having to work hard to support their family. This is a hardship of boys seen in all the cases.

**Table 4. Comparison of specific hardships**

	Tondo	Bajau	Paracelis
Specificity by gender	Burden for women due to vices of men	Stigma for men who beg on the streets	Burden for women due to vices of men
Specificity by age	Boys supporting their family	Boys supporting their family	Boys supporting their family
	Older people not getting support from children	Older people not getting support from children/family	Older people not getting support from children

### Opportunities for improving one's life circumstances

Our participants in all three sites identify several opportunities for improving their situation. Some of these opportunities are potentially available only if certain circumstances are present. For example, the opportunity to establish small business for women in Tondo and Bajau can only be realized if they have capital to start it with. With their history of escaping from violence and threats to life, the Bajau think that their only opportunity for a peaceful life is in the city.

**Table 5. Opportunities for improvement: comparison of the cases**

Opportunities	Tondo		Bajau	Paracelis
	Men	Women		
Livelihood	Paid work	Small business	Odd jobs Small business (vending)	Set up a farmers' organization
Social services	Health, education and other social services		Health services	Health services
Support	Mutual help; ( <i>bayanihan</i> )  Availability of small loans from informal sector		Mutual help	Mutual help ( <i>amuyo</i> )
Other opportunities			City as sanctuary (opportunity for peaceful life);  People's kindness	

### *Use of and access to opportunities specific to groups within cases*

There are personal circumstances that can obstruct the use of these opportunities to improve one's circumstances. This is exemplified in the case of an elderly Tondo man who lives alone and cannot benefit from social services being provided by NGOs in the area. He goes out very early in the morning to search in the garbage and return home in the evening. Since health and relief services, for example, are distributed in the community in the day time and he has nobody to line up for him to receive these, he gets excluded from the services.

In Tondo, women tend to use community resources for health and food (for example the market) while men tend to use barangay services for security and conflict resolution.

### **Levels of poverty**

Most of our participants across the three sites think that there are different levels of poverty. There is a pattern across all cases in terms of the features of the lowest level (poorest) and the upper most level (least poor). These features can be summed up into three categories: food, housing and livelihood (income). At the lowest level, there is a severe lack of food on a daily basis, housing is poor (very temporary materials, dilapidated, leaks, or no house at all), and income is irregular and very insufficient. At the upper most level there is more food on a daily basis, housing is sturdier and there is more regular income, such that it is possible to save. At this level, medicine and schooling can be affordable.

A majority of participants across all three sites also believed that they can move up and down on scales of poverty. There was no commonality between the cases in the identification of how many levels of poverty there are, what these levels are and the features of each. In both the Paracelis and Bajau cases, groups identified three levels of poverty. In the Tondo case, the middle aged women identified six levels while the boys identified only two. The middle aged women included the presence of happiness and harmony as a distinguishing feature of the upper levels of poverty and noted its absence in the lower levels. The older men included as a distinguishing feature of the lowest level of poverty as those who have no one to turn to when in need. Conversely, the less poor were seen as those who have people to turn to for help.

Nonetheless, we can see a pattern common in all the cases in some of the features of the lowest level of poverty, or most poor. One pattern is that the lowest level are the most deprived of the most basic daily needs in contrast to the other levels of poverty. Another pattern is that as one moves up through levels of poverty, the level of deprivation of basic needs lessens. When participants speak of people at the lowest level, they mostly speak in terms of what these people do not have: secure food and shelter. Conversely, when participants speak of people at the higher level (less poor), they speak in terms of what they do have, and as compared to what people at the lowest level do not have.

One way to crystallize the contrast is to focus on food. A term popularly used by our participants in Tondo and Paracelis is one scratch-one grain (*isang kahig isang tuka*).

This phrase uses the metaphor of a chicken looking for food to describe the life of the poorest of the poor. They live hand to mouth with much of their time focused on seeking food. As one goes up the ladder, this severe inadequacy in food lessens; there is more food (but still not enough). There is also now money for other things like medicine, better shelter, and for the farmers, a *carabao*. We see here an improvement not only in meeting their daily fundamental needs but in their capability to do certain things that they could not do before. For example, the farmers with *carabao* can produce more; the scavenger in Tondo who has capital can now earn from small business; the Bajau fisherman with a paddle boat can fish. Children can now go to school and potentially end the inter-generational cycle of dependent livelihood.

In other words, the capacity for independent livelihood increases as one becomes less deprived and gains more resources. Nonetheless, they are still poor because they still have to scavenge in Tondo or work hard on their farm in Paracelis. Our Bajau participants did not know how to define the features of the upper level poor.

In Table 6 below, we compare findings from all three cases regarding the features of different levels of poverty. Instead of presenting all the levels, and features of each level, by groups as identified in the findings on each case, we selected only the commonalities in participant responses in each case and collapsed the levels to poorest, midpoint poor and least poor so that we can see the patterns and differences across cases.

**Table 6. Features of levels of poverty: comparison of the cases**

Features of the different levels of poverty	Tondo	Bajau	Paracelis
Poorest	Very poor quality of shelter/no shelter Eat once a day No regular income/relies on scavenging No electricity No schooling	Relies on begging Hungry Eats once a day, mostly cassava (starch) Very poor quality of housing/no housing	Does not own farm land; relies on labor for hire No house, <i>carabao</i> Hand to mouth existence
Midpoint poor	Can afford schooling Can eat 2x a day Lives in a shanty	Can eat 2-3x a day (cassava and rice porridge) Roof doesn't leak Fish and vend aside from begging	Has house, <i>carabao</i> More food
Least poor	Has a house Has small business/does not rely on scavenging Can eat anytime Can afford schooling More household items	Can eat 3 meals a day more variety and protein Sturdy house Has motorboat Does not rely on begging	Has farmland, 2-3 <i>carabaos</i> , other things for farming Has small vehicle Sufficient food

### *Age specific*

The older groups in Tondo and Paracelis consider the absence of support as a feature of the lowest level poor.

Younger Bajau participants associate severe deprivation in clothing as a feature of the poorest of the poor. The boys included being abused by non-Bajau as a feature of the poorest. All of the Bajau participants classify themselves as poorest of the poor.

### **Movement in the ladder of poverty**

Common in all three cases is the belief that the poor can move between different levels of poverty. What can push people down are usually those situations and circumstances which worsen existing deprivations. In turn, what shifts people up are those situations and circumstances which improve their financial situation. Among the Bajau, situations are slightly better during December and holiday periods because they get more alms as people tend to be more generous during these times.

In both the Paracelis and Tondo communities, there are two types of factors than can help in movement up through the levels of poverty: increase in income and personal perseverance and industry.

Factors that push people down the scale of poverty tend to have a more lasting effect than those that move people up. Across all cases, illness or death of the primary breadwinner, typhoons and drought are the commonly cited factors that can worsen people's level of poverty. Among the Bajau, vices and domestic conflict are also cited as factors that push the poor further down.

### *Specific data*

Older men in Tondo think that old age makes them poorer. The middle aged women think that when the poor have a feeling of helplessness and they have no one to turn to, they become poorer.

### **What is needed to get out of poverty**

The view that money was not the most important factor in order to get out of poverty was a common finding across all the cases. In fact, to the boys in Paracelis, education is more important than money because it will enable them to get good and regular jobs. Another of the most important factors across all cases is regular or secure livelihood that will enable people to buy or access their basic needs. In this regard, factors that are considered highly important are fishing boats, fishing equipment and small capital for the Bajau participants; education and small capital for the Tondo participants; and good roads, farm land and *carabao* for the Paracelis farmers.

Except for the Bajau participants, personal traits of industry and diligence in schooling are also highly important. The view on perseverance and industry however provoked disagreement in most of the Paracelis groups, with some saying that it alone could not

get them out of poverty if other factors that tie them to impoverishment are not changed, such as absence of roads.

### *Specific findings*

We see a particularity in the views of older people who believe that faith in God is most important. Yet at the same time, it is from these groups in Tondo and Paracelis that we see data which indicate a sense that poverty is chronic.

From the middle aged men in Paracelis there is a belief that when they have an organization to represent their interests, they can bring themselves out of poverty. This organization will not only enable them to impact governance, but will also enable them to get support and funding from external sources for projects like a vehicle and a buying station.

Specific to the Bajau female youth is the importance of marriage and a husband for support.

### **Distribution of poverty in the household**

What clearly came out of our findings in all the cases is that there are differences in hardships being experienced by men and women, young and old. But there is divergence in views on whether or not some members of the household are poorer than others. While in Paracelis, there is agreement among all groups that no one in the household is poorer as everybody within a household is equally poor, to the Bajau groups of young people, the older people are poorer than others. This is because they are weak and dependent on the support of younger people.

In Tondo, in all the adult groups, there is divergence in views on whether it is the father or the mother who is poorer within households. The boys in Tondo felt it is the father who is more burdened with poverty. This is the same view of most of our Bajau participants. This is because the father turns over his earnings to the mother.

While across all the cases, there is commonality in the view that mothers and women budget the earnings, it is not clear whether or not she controls it. While some middle aged women in Tondo say they control their own earnings, we did not get the same data from the other cases.

Control of assets (eg inheritance) is said to be by the whole family according to the Bajau and Paracelis groups. However, as illustrated in the case of 'L' in Paracelis, there are instances when women lose control over their own inheritance.

The next section, Conclusions, will address the key issues for the field work as well as discuss the themes and concepts derived from the findings and discussion. It will also provide initial and tentative thinking regarding the main research question: what is a just and justifiable measure of poverty that is genuinely gender sensitive and capable of revealing gender disparities.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this section of the national report, we address the key issues to be clarified through the field work as well as discuss the themes and concepts derived from the findings and discussion. We will also provide initial and tentative thinking regarding the main research question: what is a just and justifiable measure of poverty that is genuinely gender sensitive and capable of revealing gender disparities.

**Key issues to be clarified through the field work** are:

### 1. Categories of poverty

- a. **Transitory versus chronic (temporal):** This question is about whether people distinguish between individuals who have been or will be poor for a very long time and those who will only be poor for a short period. For example, some people may always have trouble getting food, while other people may only have this difficulty in times of drought, or at particular times of year such as just prior to harvest.
  - b. **Very poor versus somewhat poor (severity/levels):** Do people make distinctions between the levels of poverty that some people experience? For example, some academics distinguish between the poor and the ultra-poor. Are these kinds of distinctions relevant to poor people? Do poor people think that differences of degree in the level of poverty become differences in kind?
  - c. **Actually poor versus potentially poor (risk and vulnerability):** Should the assessment of poverty take into account the degree of risk or vulnerability an individual faces? For example, take two individuals with very low consumption levels and then suppose one is at much greater risk than the other (say, one has insurance on their assets and the other does not). Is one poorer than the other?
2. **Dimensions of poverty:** What are the things that one can be deprived of that are relevant to the assessment of their poverty? This question is central to the project. What is the 'stuff' that you lack if you are poor? Does it include social and communal resources? Does it include non-material items like leisure time and physical security?
  3. **Absolute versus relative poverty:** Is poverty best understood on an absolute scale, judged against an independent standard (for example calorie intake), or on a relative scale, comparing some people to other people (for example, against the median wage)?
  4. **Access to versus control over resources and opportunities:** Does it matter for the assessment of individual poverty whether one has control over, in addition to access to, resources and opportunities? For example, suppose two women have the same level of consumption, but one lives in a household where her husband controls all of the resources, and could if he wanted reduce his wife's level of consumption, and the other lives on her own where she has control of all

resources, and thus can use them as she pleases. Are these women equally poor or not?

5. **Consumption versus assets:** Is the stock of assets that a person has relevant to an assessment of their poverty, or just the flow of consumption? If two people each receive the same daily income and consume the same number of calories, but one owns her shelter, or productive assets like livestock, or has an education, is she less poor than the other?
6. **Inputs versus outcomes:** Poverty indicators usually work in one of two ways. One way is to track a resource that one can use, for example the number of calories one has access to. Another way is to measure the achievement that results from this resource, which would in this case be nourishment. Take another case. If two individuals had the same income, but one did a better job of using it to meet their basic needs, are they less poor than the other person? The project is interested in knowing whether, when thinking about what constitutes poverty, poor people focus primarily on the level of resources available to an individual, or on the outcomes which result from the use of these resources.
7. **Specific needs of particular individuals:** Most poverty measurement do not take account of whether some people need more than other people to reach the same level of functioning. Do poor people think this is a useful distinction to make? This question is closely related to the distinction between inputs and outcomes.
8. **Length and quality of necessary work to obtain resources:** If one poor person is at the same level of consumption as another, does it matter in assessing their poverty if one has to work longer or undertake more degrading or dangerous work than the other to reach that level of consumption?

## Categories of poverty

We do not have primary data that tells us in a straightforward manner whether or not our participants think there are different categories of poverty (as distinct from different levels of poverty). What is provided below is what we inferred from the findings.

### *a. Transitory versus chronic*

The degree of deprivations can be transitory, but no data suggests that poverty is in itself transitory. Deprivations can worsen or lessen under certain circumstances, but generally either of these can happen when income or livelihood decreases or improves slightly.

What the data suggests is that poverty is chronic. This is because the things that are needed to get out of poverty (such as education, regular or independent livelihood) are not available or accessible:

After harvesting, you again borrow money from the financier. When you sell your harvest, your earning is just enough to pay for your debts so you're left with nothing. You go home empty handed and you borrow money again. That's what is actually happening here. That's why there is no improvement in our lives and so we remain poor" (Middle aged man, Paracelis).

Trapped in debt (Paracelis small farm owners) and impoverished by landlessness (Paracelis landless farmers), without opportunity or capability to find secure jobs (Tondo) due to lack of education or skills, and being discriminated (Bajau) keep our participants in the cycle of poverty. This is most clearly illustrated in inter-generational begging among the Bajau.

However, there are the poor who are more exposed to the risk of hunger at longer and more frequent periods of the year than others such as the charcoal makers in Tondo and the landless farmers in Paracelis and the entire Bajau community. On the other hand, the farm owners of Paracelis face the prospect of hunger at those times between planting and harvesting and after typhoons and during drought, situations which worsen their underlying poverty.

### *Age and chronic poverty*

Instead of gender, what is clearer is that old age is a determinant of the chronic nature of poverty for the very poor. With families who are themselves struggling to survive and therefore unable to provide regular and adequate support, combined with old age and the absence of social insurance, creates a situation of chronic poverty for this group. For example, this quote expresses a sense of hopelessness by an older Tondo participant, “we will die poor.”

In summary, poverty is certainly chronic when a combination of circumstances exists. This is dramatically seen in the Bajau community – the coming together of ethnicity, migrant status, absence of schooling and resources for independent livelihood as well as political voicelessness. However, these factors are not necessarily present in all cases of chronic poverty.

### *b. Actually poor versus potentially poor*

Vulnerability is a dimension of poverty as revealed in our cases. It is so because poverty is characterized by exposure of the poor to particular risks or threats yet they do not have the capability to protect themselves against such threats. But the threats and capability for protection differ among the various groups of the poor.

There are threats similarly faced by all the poor such as those that result from political marginalization, examples of which are the inaccessibility of basic services and denial of political rights. Yet the capability for political representation could be differentiated by factors like the capability for collective voice of organized communities, such as in Tondo, in contrast to its absence as exemplified in the cases of Paracelis and the Bajau.

The threats could also be differentiated by the poor's degree of deprivation. For example while the very poor face the daily threat of hunger, such a threat is not experienced by the least poor since they now have more capability for independent livelihood and for procuring food.

### *Gender determines vulnerability in poverty*

Gender is a determinant of vulnerability in poverty. We have examples of how women can be both actually poor and potentially poor. 'L's case is a good example. Because of her land inheritance, when she got married she had a major resource for independent livelihood. However, she lost control over this resource, became dependent on her husband's earnings, and with her illness, has very limited capacity to earn and income for herself. We can infer that she was potentially poor when she entered into marriage and became actually poor when she lost control over her inheritance and lost social support from her own family.

This case illustrates also how illness, when combined with the other factors present in 'L's case, is a factor that can make the less poor potentially poorer. This is because illness, in a situation of fragility, directly and severely impacts capacity for livelihood. A useful analogy is of a person who is almost drowning in the sea, with water almost up to their nose, and can drown by a reduction in their capacity to stay afloat. Illness reduces the capacity to stay afloat in this hugely fragile situation.

### **Dimensions of poverty**

The poor are poor because they are deprived of fundamental needs. The deprivations can be classified into two categories: (a) deprivation in material basic needs (food, shelter, secure livelihood); and (b) deprivation in basic non-material needs (social support – eg someone to turn to; security – eg children crossing rivers to go to school and Bajau being mauled; political recognition – eg Bajau not allowed to vote, Tondo squatters evicted).

It can be reasonably questioned whether deprivation of social-political needs (such as lack of security and denial of political recognition) is a dimension of poverty. Is it not true that those who are not poor could also experience these? Our view is that there is something about poverty that, when combined with factors like ethnicity (Bajau being mauled) or ones social-legal identity (squatters) particularizes these deprivations and make them a dimension of poverty.

We can easily see that the situation of being a squatter is a deprivation of security and of shelter and residence. How about the smell of garbage hanging around one's self, the absence of trees and garden around the house? Are these dimensions of poverty? In the view of our Tondo participants, they are. What we infer from this is that poverty is a whole experience that links various deprivations and creates a particular kind of life for the poor.

### *Age-based deprivation*

In our view, there is an additional dimension of poverty for male youth – deprivation of childhood because they have to work hard at an early age to earn for their family.

Poverty has a way of enclosing the poor in a grip such that even hardships that may not seem to be directly related to poverty become more difficult because of it. It affects every aspect of life, such as old age for example. This is an example of hardship that

could be experienced by the elderly in any social class. To be poor and old makes the hardship of old age specific among the elderly poor.

### *Gender-based deprivation*

Although this is not a majority view as there was disagreement among the Paracelis participants, with many saying that men and women have the same amount of rest time, we give significance to the view of some older men that women have less rest time. A quote from one of them captures it: "*... Rest... that's true, because after we have eaten, the women are still washing the dishes while the men are already stretched out like...*"

One inference is that women experience more deprivation of rest time than men in the same household. This suggests that gender particularizes some dimensions of poverty and is experienced by some and not by others in the same household.

### **Absolute versus relative poverty**

There are the poor who are very poor and the poor who are least poor. Each level of poverty is distinguished by its features. These features differentiate the kind of life people have in each level of poverty. While all the poor suffer from deprivations of basic needs, the very poor suffer the greatest degree of deprivation of the **most basic daily needs**. The poverty of this group of people is absolute, as exemplified in the Bajau case. They are absolutely poor, not because others are less poor but because they are severely deprived of the most basic daily needs for survival. Whether or not there are groups within the community that are less poor, as a point of reference, is not relevant; for example, as in the Bajau case where a majority are very poor, that is why most cannot tell the features of the less poor.

As the poor move through different levels of poverty, deprivation of the most basic daily needs lessen. The least poor have more of the most basic daily needs and they have a greater degree of capability for independent livelihood. They are still poor relative to the non-poor, but less poor compared to the absolutely poor.

Therefore, poverty is both absolute (for the very poor/poorest) and relative (for the upper poor/least poor).

### *Gender differentiates absolute poverty*

Gender could differentiate absolute poverty. Among the very poor, for instance, the burden of poverty is different for adult men and women. Adult men are burdened by failure to comply with the social expectation to be providers for the family, exemplified in the case of Bajau men begging. Women on the other hand are burdened by the social expectation to ensure the welfare of the family and therefore forced to find ways to provide food, for example. Where men fail to provide for their family, this impacts men and women differently.

### **Access to versus control over resources and opportunities**

We use 'L' (Paracelis), 'DD'(Bajau) and a middle aged woman in Tondo (who scavenges) to show that control over resources can distinguish one type of poor from another, but that it also may not. 'L', as we had discussed earlier, has lost control over her inheritance, has no control over the earnings of her husband, and on her own, has very limited capacity to earn. 'DD' is the head of a big household that includes her children and grandchildren and she has control over the earnings (mostly from begging) of her family. The middle aged woman from Tondo has control over her own earnings but she has no control over her husband's earnings even though these are turned over to her for budgeting.

We can say that 'L' is poorer than the middle aged woman from Tondo because the latter has some resources of her own. But we cannot say that 'DD' is as poor as the middle aged woman from Tondo even though both of them have control over some earnings. This is because there is virtually nothing to control for 'DD'. What is earned in one day goes towards food, which most times is not enough to cover the cost of food for the day.

### **Consumption versus assets**

It is clear from our data that having assets is a distinguishing feature of different levels of poverty. Having capital for small business (Tondo and Bajau), a boat for fishing (Bajau) and a *carabao* (Paracelis), for example, are features of the poor who are less poor than the poorest. In addition, in all the cases, we see schooling (getting education) as a characteristic of the less poor.

### **Inputs versus outcomes**

Our participants focus on both the resources that they do not have and on the outcome of resources if they have them. However, they did not think in terms of calories.

Let us use the example of food in the Bajau case. Hunger or lack of food is a refrain in all our data sets from our Bajau participants. They are focused on this because this is a material, constant problem. They do not attend school because they are always hungry, and also because of the need to go begging and because of the harassment from non-Bajau children. Data from Bajau participants also suggested that if there is a feeding program in the school, they will most probably attend school regularly.

Let us now consider the use of resources as a way of distinguishing one group of poor from another group. Being lazy and hooked on vices as a characteristic of the poorest are data that repeatedly came out in Paracelis from various groups. Participant suggestions that one way to get out of poverty was to avoid vices, be frugal and industrious also repeatedly came out in both Tondo and Paracelis. Although there was no agreement, there were certainly participants who shared these views. To some of our participants, therefore, those who are lazy and waste their earnings on vices are poorer than those who do not.

### **Specific needs of particular individuals**

In both Tondo and Paracelis, men and boys consume more food than others in the household because they are the ones who labor hard. They are also prioritized for medicine because being ill prevents them from earning for the family.

To the Bajau, children, women and older people should be prioritized for food because men can survive hunger longer. In all the cases, small children should be prioritized in serving food because they cannot survive hunger.

Women should always be given enough money for immediate needs because they are the ones who feed the family. Older people compared to other age groups are in more need of support from their family because they are weak and cannot earn for themselves.

### **Length and quality of necessary work to obtain resources**

Data from participants show that different ways of earning a living involve different levels of difficulty and risk. We will use scavenging in Tondo to illustrate this point. Men and male youth have to scavenge at dusk or late evenings or at whatever time the trucks dump the garbage. The idea is to be there ahead of the others to have more opportunities for getting the more valuable goods (such as those that can be sold at good prices to the junk shop). Rushing the truck or scavenging whilst garbage is being unloaded on the barge is part of this strategy. This is tremendously risky.

On the other hand, those who have small business, say a small junk shop or a sidecar, while they are still poor they do not have to engage in this highly risky work.

Women on the other hand scavenge during day time and not on the barge, but usually from garbage that has already been searched by men. This is less risky although it means also that there is less opportunity for them to get valuable goods.

However, this is not the reason why some of our participants think men are poorer than women. Rather, they see the reason as being because men turn over their earnings to women.

### **Thematic and conceptual conclusions**

We now turn to certain analytic themes and concepts that could hopefully contribute to clarifying the key issues to be included in Phase Two. These analytic themes and concepts are embedded in the findings and at this point we bring the analysis from predominantly empirical to predominantly conceptual and analytic. While we will be surfacing analytic themes and concepts embedded in the data, we do this only for issues we feel we have enough primary data to justify such analysis, concepts and themes. We do not do this when the data is too minimal to support such conclusions, in order to avoid speculation.

### *Multiple, simultaneous, layered deprivations*

The deprivations of the poor are multiple, simultaneously occurring and layered. It is obvious why these are multiple and how these simultaneously occur. We take up how deprivations are layered.

Let us use lack of secure livelihood as an example of a primary deprivation. Insecure livelihood (e.g. dependence on selling ones labor for hire on a farm and inadequate income) creates another layer of deprivations exemplified in lack of food and adequate shelter as well as the deprivation of the young of opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills which prevents them from getting secure jobs which in turn keeps the cycle of poverty going for generations.

One way, therefore, of understanding poverty (and perhaps also of thinking about how it ought to be measured) is not only that it involves severe, multiple and simultaneously occurring deprivations, but that these deprivations are layered. That is that combinations of deprivations create other deprivations that, together, further pull the poor down and make it difficult for them to get out of poverty.

### *Some deprivations are gendered*

We use the example from Tondo, of the boys who have to drop out of school in order to scavenge and earn an income to support their family. They are male and considered old enough to work for a living for their family. That is the socially defined role of teenage boys in a poor community (note the similarity to Paracelis, urban and rural). While there are a few school sponsorships available to the youth in Tondo, it is more difficult for boys to avail of these because they have to prioritize earning for their family.

Another example is vices. There is something about poverty that, when combined with gender, could particularize the dynamics of vices. For example, gambling of the husband deprives the family of food on the table, adding a specific hardship for his wife who is expected to ensure the family's welfare. The rich may be able to afford their gambling habit, but the poor cannot; men may not worry whether or not there is enough provision for the wife to feed the children, but women should and do. How can this and the experience of the boys be reflected in a measurement of poverty?

### *Ethnicity combined with other deprivations differentiates poverty*

The most marginalized community is an ethnic minority in Iligan. There are other ethnic minorities in the city but the Bajau are a particular ethnic group because of their history and circumstances. Ethnicity has two dimensions: the internal (emic) subjective consciousness of members of their distinctiveness, and the external (etic) perception by others of such distinctiveness. An ethnic group becomes one because people in it and outside of it know that it is one.<sup>13 14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Hughes E C. 1994. On Work, Race and the Sociological Imagination, ed. Coser L A. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>14</sup> Jenkins R. 1997. Rethinking Ethnicity. London: Sage Publications

In most instances, people are not conscious of their ethnicity: “For many people, ethnicity is a background factor, part of the cultural furniture of everyday life, and consequently little attended to.”<sup>15</sup> In Bourdieu’s words, ethnicity is “that which we have hitherto known without knowing about.”<sup>16</sup> People become conscious of their ethnic identification when “... identity is problematized during interaction across the (ethnic) boundary.”<sup>17</sup> Ethnic identification has a lot to do with local histories, circumstances and situations.

### *Is the degree of poverty different for some members of a household?*

Our data are divergent on this topic. One view says yes, although this is the minority view. The majority view says it is not. No one is poorer than the others within the same household. However, if we understand poverty to be deprivations of fundamental requisites for normal functioning, which render the poor highly vulnerable to certain threats, then indeed, there could be differences in degree of poverty within a household. For example, older people within a poor household who are almost totally dependent on support, if deprived of that support, are more vulnerable to hunger and poorer than the younger members.

### *Poverty as disability*

Poverty, because of the deprivations, has a disabling impact on poor people. The more severe the deprivations, the more incapable are the poor in the performance of a normal life. For example, they do not have the capacity to live a healthy life because they do not have enough nutrition due to frequent lack of food. One way of looking at poverty is that it is a form of disability. It is so because it severely constrains the poor from functioning as normal human beings.

The cumulative effect of deprivations (with consequent lack of capabilities) explains why the tendency for downward movement through different levels of poverty is stronger or more likely than movement up the levels of poverty or out of poverty.

### *Vulnerability specific to poverty*

All human beings face some threats in one form or another at certain points in their life. Some people are more capable or have a greater capacity of avoiding these threats or of protecting themselves than others. The threats commonly faced by the poor are those that are linked to deprivations of basic needs. Poverty renders them far less capable of avoiding those threats because they do not have real choices or the capacity for protecting themselves against those threats.

Vulnerability has two intersecting facets: internal (compromised ability for protection or avoidance of threat) and external (nature and degree of the threat). The degree of harm posed by the threat could be modified by internal capability for protection (e.g. degree of

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid p77

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Ibid p78

the threat of hunger due to drought could be reduced by having buffer food stocks or adequate irrigation of farms). However, internal capability could be stretched to the limit for poor people since they usually do not experience isolated threats but waves of adversity – such as drought, typhoon, indebtedness, low harvest, coming one after the other or even simultaneously. “Vulnerable human systems are poorly equipped to cope with adversity. The vulnerability of poor people in particular reflects heightened sensitivity and reduced capacity to cope with waves of adversity; hence the fragility and insecurity of poverty-ridden communities.”<sup>18</sup>

#### *Interconnectedness of deprivations and vulnerabilities*

While it may be useful to conceptually unpack the deprivations and vulnerabilities to fully understand how each is located (how central it is, for example) in the phenomenon of poverty (such as for purposes of measurement), it is clear that we cannot in real life separate one deprivation from other deprivations. So it is with vulnerabilities if we are to see what (and how) particular combinations of deprivations and vulnerabilities create specific experiences of poverty.

#### *Poverty deprives the poor of agency*

“Agency concerns events of which the individual is the perpetrator...whatever happened would not have happened had that individual not intervened.”<sup>19</sup> The broader social, political and economic milieu in which people seek to act, and factors such as education, wealth and skills – all interact and influence the extent of agency available to the individual and their choices and actions.<sup>20</sup>

The poor are creatures of circumstance more than they are the creators of the circumstances in their own lives. This is so because they suffer from severe lack of opportunities, of real choices and of capabilities to act as free human agents. Many of the things that happen in their life are not the result of choices they made but of the actions of other actors and institutions.

Power and freedom are implicated in agency. Possession or absence of these differentiates the capacity of or limits to one’s agency. Paracelis farmers and Tondo charcoal makers are forced to sell their produce at very low prices to middle men (who are also mostly the creditors); Bajau boys would rather not get water to avoid harassment by other boys.

When poverty is combined with gender, age and ethnicity, the lack of agency is further particularized. Would an understanding of different levels of agency be a useful approach to measuring differences in poverty among men and women, among the young and the old, among ethnic groups?

---

<sup>18</sup> Glavovic B, Scheyvens R, Overton J. Waves of Adversity, Layers of Resilience: Exploring the Sustainable Livelihood Approach. Available at: [http://www.devnet.org.nz/conf2002/papers/glavovic\\_overton\\_scheyvens.pdf](http://www.devnet.org.nz/conf2002/papers/glavovic_overton_scheyvens.pdf) . Accessed Feb 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Giddens, A. 1984. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Agency*. California: University of California Berkeley Press. p9.

<sup>20</sup> Sen A. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

### *Power in measuring poverty*

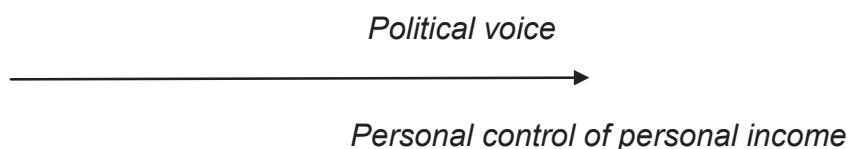
Undergirding all these discussions is the concept of power; or more accurately, the lack of it. All the participants in our three cases lacked the power to influence state policies, programs and actions to make these more responsive to their actual needs. This has material effects on their circumstances.

Yet powerlessness is not only a function of poverty; it is also a function of gender. This means that poverty differentiates power distribution between the poor and the non-poor, and also among the poor, between men and women. This is seen in both the household and the community. In the household, this is exemplified by the lack of control women have over the use of their own time (such as sleep time being contingent on the needs of babies). This is in contrast to men having more control than women of their time use.

In the community this is seen in the male public voice in Paracelis although we do not have enough data to surmise that this has impacted poverty distribution between men and women in the community.

Political voice, gender and control of income are interlinked. Let us use the middle aged women in Tondo to illustrate this analysis. Tondo is one community where several NGOs, including NGOs that work for women's rights, have established themselves for a number of years. In Tondo, women are active and have leadership roles in community organizations. This is the only case where we have data that some women control their own earnings. If we explore a possible analytic angle, we can infer that women here (at least some of them), have acquired to some degree a political voice in the community. This makes it possible for them to assert their right to personally control their own earnings.

Does this make them less poor than the women in our other case study sites who have no personal control of their own earnings? Arguably, yes, it does. Although chances are these women will spend their earnings on the children's needs (e.g. schooling), not on their own, we also have data that a few of the women put some of their earnings into savings. Again chances are, these savings will be quickly depleted by some daily critical needs of the family, but then again if some circumstances exist, like the presence of support, these women could start a small business and would be less dependent on scavenging or on their husband's earnings.



The diagram above attempts to show a possible correlation between political voice and personal control of personal income of women.

## **What is a just and justifiable measure of poverty that is genuinely gender sensitive and capable of revealing gender disparities?**

There are two parts to this question: (a) a genuinely gender sensitive measure; and (b) one that is capable of revealing gender disparities in poverty. We attempt to put forward initial and tentative thoughts based on what we have learned from our case studies.

### ***A genuinely gender sensitive measure***

Our research suggests some of the features of this kind of measurement. First, it recognizes that poverty is gendered in different ways and in different degrees. These differences are due to specificities in the circumstances of the individual poor.

Second, data suggests that gender impacts both poor men and poor women but in significantly different ways. This in turn differentiates deprivation, hardship, vulnerability, capability and agency.

Third, the various combinations of factors like gender, age, ethnicity and geographic location in poverty differentiates in significant ways deprivation, lack of capability, agency, fragility and vulnerabilities.

### ***Capable of revealing gender disparities in poverty***

Using the individual as the unit of measurement in poverty analysis could partly address this issue. In addition, capturing particularities in individual circumstances as well as specific combinations of multiple and layered deprivations, and perhaps putting these into models or typologies may be able to reveal the disparities.

### ***A single measure?***

Could these typologies then be useful as templates for measuring poverty? There could be tremendous methodological challenges in this approach, a point taken up in some literature. Would the difficulties in methodology be enough to justify choosing a single measure?