Multidimensionality of Poverty: Bangladesh Perspectives

The hidden dimensions of poverty

**International participatory research led by
ATD Fourth World and the University of Oxford
in cooperation with Mati**

> *"If people can fulfill the basic needs in their life then they can be happy even in a defective social state."*
>
> **– Roksana,**
> *People with direct experience in poverty (Bangladesh)*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Introduction

Poverty refers to forms of economic, social, and psychological deprivation among people arising from a lack of ownership and control of or access to resources for the attainment of a required minimum level of living. Poverty is not only a matter of material deprivation but also one of immaterial deprivation such as afflictions, oppression. For a long time, poverty was measured uni-dimensionally (only in terms of material deprivation) around the world where income or expenditure were considered as the main parameter. Now, the measurement of unidimensional poverty is viewed as an overly narrow definition which overlooks the social, physical, psychological, cultural and political aspects. Consequently, different aspects of poverty have been explored, such as the social exclusion and deprivation approach, the human rights approach, the participatory poverty approach etc. A broader approach to poverty analysis was also suggested by the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) offered by the UNDP and the University of Oxford in 2010 wherein there are 10 indicators grouped under three dimensions.

The United Nations has agreed that all countries should aim to reduce all forms of poverty by 2030. In general, most developing countries measure income poverty which is $1.90 per day. But poverty is not just about money; it is everything else. This study tries to reach a consensus about what poverty in all its forms really means. The intention is to make recommendations to policymakers about how poverty should be properly measured and policies monitored to ensure that poverty rates fall rather than rise. The United Nations recommends that children and young people be consulted as well as adults. The 2012– 2014 evaluation of the Millennium Development Goals showed that anything done for populations in poverty without their involvement works against them. Many anti-poverty policies are carried out using specific indicators, but without consulting the populations who are meant to benefit. Therefore, we need to tackle the problem at its root by working directly with these populations.

ATD Fourth World and the University of Oxford have launched a participatory research project initially entitled "Dimensions of poverty and how to measure them" to develop new measures of poverty and to establish their relative importance and to explore the ways in which the various dimensions are related. In this research, the Merging of Knowledge (MoK) method was used to identify the dimensions of poverty.

cf the report 'Challenge 2015: Towards Sustainable Development That Leaves no One Behind' presented in New York in June 2013 ahead the UN General Assembly , https://www.atd-fourthworld.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/07/Challenge_2015_-_ATD_Fourth_World.pdf

Methodology

The uniqueness of this research is that a new participatory research approach, known as "Merging of Knowledge (MoK)" and introduced by ATD Fourth World, has been followed. In this method, different stakeholders are offered fair conditions to express their opinions freely on a specific topic / problem. Afterward, all of the information generated is merged, while taking care of all stakeholders' opinions in their presence and coming up with a consensus. Merging of Knowledge is a technique to help people facing extreme poverty and social exclusion dialogue with policy makers, business leaders, social workers, and teachers. The goal is to overcome differences in speaking and thinking, life experience and perspective, so that constructive discussions can occur. Merging Knowledge bridges gaps between people from different backgrounds by creating an environment of respect and patience.

To identify the national "dimensions of poverty" in Bangladesh, three modules were completed; they are known as Module-1, Module-2 and Module-3 in this research. A brief discussion of these modules follows:

Module-1:

MATI, a non-government organization (NGO) in Bangladesh was responsible for conducting this study. This research was implemented both in the global north (France, UK and USA) and the global south (Bangladesh, Bolivia and Tanzania) at the same time and with the same objectives; all research activities and research techniques were directed by the University of Oxford and ATD Fourth World. The main objective of Module-1 was to form a National Research Team (NRT) in Bangladesh. Therefore, the Executive Director of MATI arranged several meetings with academics from different universities, NGO activists and people with direct experience of poverty to form an NRT in Bangladesh. Subsequently, the NRT of Bangladesh was formed with 15 members. Among them were some Mati NGO members, some people directly experienced in poverty, development activist/practitioners and also two Professors from Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU). A list of NRT members and their positions is presented in Appendix-I. After forming the NRT, an initiative was taken to build bonds among team members. Each member invited others to their home to get together to know each other well. In this module, a full batch of MoK sessions was performed/ organized step by step to understand the whole process involved in the Merging of Knowledge. In addition, NRT members defined their own set of dimensions of poverty.

Module-2:

For Module-2, the Bangladesh NRT focused on participants from rural areas. It took NRT members several meetings, contacts with other NGOs and eld visits to set up ve (5) outreach peer groups of people with direct experience of poverty from different rural areas of Bangladesh. These groups included day laborers, landless people, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, tiger widows. In addition, two (2) academic groups were formed from representatives of different development organizations or NGOs working with disadvantaged populations in rural areas.

Module-3

The Bangladesh National Research (NRT) Team decided to work with people from urban areas for Module-3. Although the population in Bangladesh is predominantly rural, with almost 75 percent of the population living in rural areas, and the rest living in urban areas, big urban centers/cities like Dhaka, Chittagong, Mymensingh are growing on an ever-faster scale. About 18.9 percent of the Bangladesh population in urban areas live below the poverty line. Nine (9) peer groups were selected by the NRT after visits in various urban communities, meetings and assessments. Among these nine (9) groups, five (5) groups were composed of people with direct experience of poverty, including day laborers, women with disabilities, city migrants, ethnic minorities and stateless people, all living in urban areas. Furthermore, two (2) academic groups were formed from representatives of different institutions and two (2) practitioner groups were also formed from representatives of different development organizations and NGOs, all working with urban disadvantaged populations.

Algorithms used in this research

Four algorithms were used for each peer group to identify the different characteristics of poverty or causes of poverty. These are (i) the picture exercise, (ii) the poverty snake, (iii) the body map and (iv) the good and bad sides of life. A two-day meeting was arranged for each peer group at the MATI office where accommodation and meals were provided from the research budget. A brief definition of and the procedures for these four algorithms are as follows:

Picture Exercise:

An array of pictures cut out of magazines is spread out on the floor; participants chose pictures they feel are related to poverty or associated with poverty and explain why they chose this particular picture i.e. similarities with his/her life experience. Participants can take 2 or 3 pictures. Participants have to explain their own opinions and what they understand; they are not allowed to consult with others.

Poverty Snake:

This activity started with a word which was "Poverty". In the group, the first person says "poverty" and the next person has to say something related to poverty from his/her life. In this way, everyone has to choose a word related to the word the previous person has said. Facilitators take note of these words and later glue them on a big poster in the form of a snake.

Body Map:

Participants are presented with the picture of a person or preferably asked to draw a person. They are then told that the person is in poverty and asked: what is on the person's mind? What is their heart? What does their gut feel about poverty? What do their eyes notice about poverty? What about their nose; what does it smell? What do their legs think of poverty? What about their arms and their hands? This process typically generates a list of thoughts about the nature of poverty which can be further discussed.

Good Side and Bad Side:

Participate sit together and think about the good things in their lives at the present time and share them with others. Participants can tell different stories. After that each partcipant has to share the worst part or the bad aspects of their lives. Note-takers will note everything and make two posters, one for the Good Side and one for the Bad Side.

Merging of Knowledge (MoK) Procedure

As mentioned earlier, we completed three modules to identify the dimensions of poverty where Module-1 was performed by the NRT. This module was just for learning the total procedures of the MoK and we didn't include the findings of Module-1 with our final dimensions. For Module-2 (rural peer groups), nine peer groups were selected from three different categories of people. Five (5) peer groups from people with direct experience of poverty (PIP), two (2) peer groups from practitioners (PR) working for poor people (development organizations, NGOs etc.) and two (2) academic (AC) peer groups from different educational institutions who are basically doing research for poor people in rural areas. All four algorithms (picture, snake, body map, and the good and bad sides of life) were performed with all of the peer groups one by one to uncover the characteristics and dimensions of poverty. At least 8 days were required to form a peer group and to explain the whole procedure to them. Afterwards, we started two days of activities for each peer group. After completing all of the algorithms, each group identified their poverty characteristics and dimensions. Then, two representatives were selected from each peer group to merge the characteristics and dimensions of each category of person (PIP, PR and AC). Again, a one and a half day-long meeting was arranged for merging each category's (PIP, PR and AC) characteristics and

dimensions. PIP representatives merged the characteristics and dimensions we found from 5 peer groups of PIP. In the same way, PR and AC representatives merged the characteristics and dimensions that were found from the peer groups of PR and AC, respectively. At this stage, we found three sets of dimensions from three categories (PIP, PR and AC). Next, the NRT arranged a day-long meeting with all of the representatives of these three categories for merging these three sets of dimensions along with the relevant characteristics. Gathering opinions from all of the representatives of all of the categories, we were able to merge all of the characteristics and dimensions and found a total of nine dimensions in rural areas (Appendix-II). In the same way, we identified the urban dimensions of poverty from nine peer groups in urban areas of Bangladesh and found nine dimensions from urban areas (Appendix-III). At this stage, we therefore had nine dimensions from rural areas and nine dimensions from urban areas. To identify the national dimensions, the NRT arranged a one and a half-day meeting with all of the representatives from the rural and urban peer groups. Finally, after a thoughtful discussion, we merged all these 18 dimensions (9 rural + 9 urban) into 9 dimensions (Appendix-IV) which are known as the national dimensions of poverty in Bangladesh.

The total merging procedure is shown in Figure -2. Nine overall dimensions of poverty were found after merging the rural and urban

PIP - People with direct experience of poverty
PR - Practitioners
AC - Academic

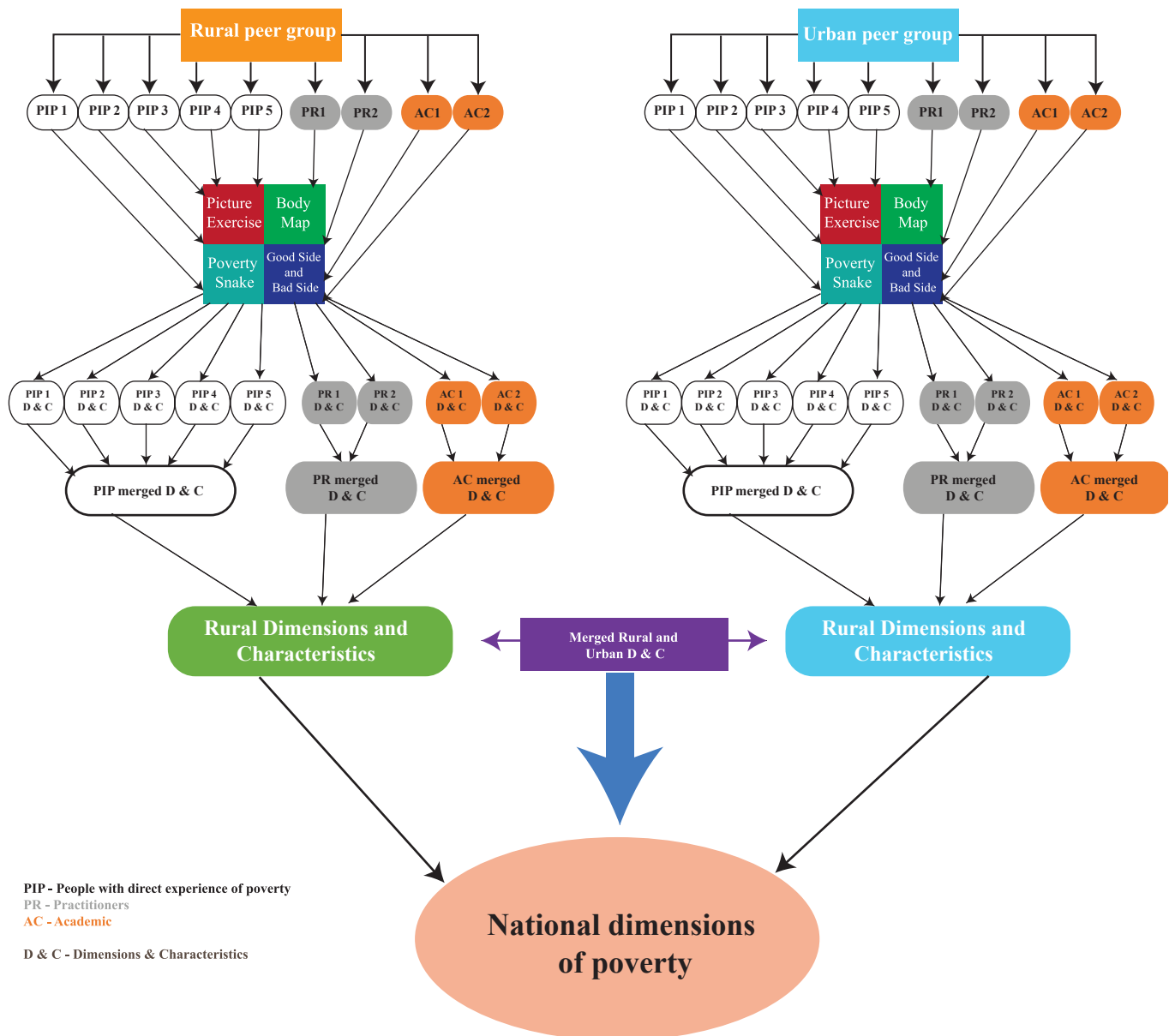D & C - Dimensions & Characteristics

Figure 2: Merging of Knowledge procedure followed in Bangladesh

Dimensions of Poverty in Bangladesh

Unmet Basic Needs

Definition:

Inability to provide / manage sufficient food, clothing, housing, education and health care for self and family members/dependents due to limited resources or insufficient income.

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Unmet Basic Needs

Description:

Article 15 of the Constitution of Bangladesh requires the State to ensure people's access to basic necessities including food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care as one of the fundamental principles of State policy. After independence, remarkable progress has been achieved in the case of food production; however, about 40 million people - one quarter of the population – still remain food insecure and about 11 million suffer from acute hunger.

The poor, especially those who live in slums, are among the groups who are the most poorly served by the education system in Bangladesh. They lack wealth, power and social connections and are probably under-counted in national surveys and are often ignored in policy and programs. Poor access to quality health services and high costs threaten Bangladesh's momentum towards universal health coverage.

"Poor women cannot eat nutritious food when they are pregnant, which is why they sometimes give birth to a disable child"
- Academics

A serious shortage and an unequal distribution of qualified health personnel are major stumbling blocks: only 25% of health workers serve rural areas, but this is where 70% of the population lives. Poor people cannot wear clean and new/fresh clothing and most of them wear old clothing.

"Disabled children cannot get admission to school. School authorities don't want to admit them to their schools. Disabled people even have to face problems when they walk on the road or go outside" - People in Poverty

"Poor people's children don't have the opportunity to have computer training /education. If they had this opportunity, they could earn money in the future and their future would be bright"
- People in Poverty

"Poor people don't have enough winter clothing. They are not able to buy enough winter clothes for them" - Practitioners

Characteristics:

"Because of their low incomes, people live in broken houses. They suffer from the cold, the heat and the rain because they cannot build a good house or repair their houses." - Practitioners

"Because of malnutrition, people lose their energy and work ability and they cannot work properly" - Academics

Lack of food, accommodation and security; depression because of being unable to meet their needs; lacking good food, they eat rotten food; eating less/not eating to preserve food for children; lack of nutritious food; lack of pure water; lack of space in their houses; lack of space for building houses; poor sanitation; inability to work because of physical illness; inadequate medical care; disease more serious because of mismanagement of treatment; mother mortality high; less opportunities for education; lack of technical education; discrimination in education.

14

Insufficient Money

Definition:

This dimension refers to the situation when people do not have sufficient money to purchase / meet the basic needs, or their income level is very low to fulfill their family's basic needs.

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Insufficient Money

Description:

Sufficient money is a pre-condition for survival. Without sufficient money, people cannot cover basic needs, which leads to chronic illness, as well as a struggle with chronic food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition. This situation makes them feel helpless, hinders them from sending their children to school and ensures that children are forced to work to support their families.

People are bound to go into debt when they do not have sufficient money to survive which makes them more dependent on others and creates a vicious cycle of poverty if they do not have any other sources of income. Although per capita income is increasing year by year in Bangladesh, income inequality is also increasing, which makes a poor person's life more difficult. Due to inflation, real income is not increasing and the purchasing power of the poor is going down.

"My daughter is young enough for marriage, but we cannot arrange her marriage due to a lack of money"
- People in Poverty

"Often quarreling in the family when the husband has less income and cannot fulfill the basic needs of the family."
- Practitioner

"Want to have domestic animals to generate income/increase family income but cannot buy due to a lack of money" - People in Poverty

"Because of less income, poor people have no choice about their food. They have to eat whatever they get. No chance to have nutritious food" - Practitioners

"Poor people don't get any help when they want to start a small business. They have to take loans from local NGO's or from any rich person, but they have to pay a very high interest rate." - Practitioners

Characteristics:

Cannot arrange marriage for the daughter due to a lack of money; cannot start own business due to a lack of money; cannot meet the needs of the child; unable to use a vehicle due to a lack of money; hope is not met; wants to have domestic animals to make income, but cannot buy them; no electricity, no kerosene, no lamp by which to study; cannot even buy soap; having to wear old, broken and worn clothes; cannot have 3 meals a day; having to ask for food; crisis in the family because a husband died; when ill, no treatment, unable to work, no income; cannot afford the right treatment for a son's illness; cannot get children admitted to a good school; stops education due to a lack of money.

Bad Governance, and Political and Social Instability

Definition:

Poverty is created due to a lack of proper public resource distribution. Poverty is also created when the government does not respond to the critical needs of society and general problems are not managed effectively and efficiently. In addition, political instability, such as conflicts and widespread competition among various political parties, creates permanent unrest in the country which stimulates poverty. A continuous lack of basic needs or goods and services, such as food, education, shelter, and treatment for some, while others enjoy them as private resources, promotes social instability.

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Bad Governance, and Political and Social Instability

Description:

Good governance is a cross-cutting issue and affects every sector of development, especially in a developing country. There are four pillars of good governance which support the building of effective and efficient institutions of government: accountability, transparency, participation and predictability. In Bangladesh, most of these are absent in government institutions. Poor people are excluded from the institutions, which makes them powerless and affects their lives. Public expenditure on health, education and sanitation benefits the non-poor more than the poor due to lack of good governance.

There are many initiatives the government has undertaken to reduce poverty, but most of these programs have not been successful, due to accountability and transparency. Though government policy papers very often emphasize the participation of the poor, such participation remains elusive. The formal structure of accountability is notoriously faulty. More importantly, downward accountability towards the beneficiaries is quite flawed, as evidenced by several social service programs, including poverty alleviation programs implemented at the village level. A lack of accountability for using public funds boosts corruption at the local government level. The government does not seem to be very keen about either citizen engagement or participation.

"Poor people never get justice."
- People in Poverty

"Whenever there is relief material coming from the government, poor people do not get such relief. Rich and powerful people take and distribute it among their relatives."
- People in Poverty

Due to this powerlessness and lack of participation, poor people cannot play their roles as citizen. Top-down poverty reduction policies and political interventions during program implementations hinder poverty reduction in Bangladesh. Good governance can act as the means to an end of poverty in Bangladesh. In countries where cultural or ethnic groups feel that there is economic, political and social inequality, it is more likely to occur, causing a vicious cycle that leads to poverty.

Characteristics:

"A lack of good governance is most intolerable, even more than political instability. Good governance can bring peace unless there is political instability."
- Academics

"With a defective social state, family bonding, respect for others, friendly relations between neighbors are now broken and the same thing is happening to drug-addicted peoples."
- Practitioners

"Due to a lack of good governance, there is a lack of employment and money. To get a job, most of us have to give a bribe. But there is no guarantee to get this job even after giving a bribe."
- Practitioners

The teaching system at school is not good; increasing crime; a lack of law; not getting permission from the government to start a business; stigma (blamed because their husband was killed by a tiger); the hands of rich people are longer than those of poor people; no value placed on poor people in society; domestic violence; brain drain; child labor; gender discrimination; a political vicious circle; tax evasion practice; a lack of accountability; the unequal distribution of resources; gender discrimination; insufficiency of law enforcement; misadministration; family turmoil; dowry system; family members always creating pressure to impose their opinions when making any kind of decision; a lack of women's protection /security; superstition; making fun of physical conditions; income discrimination; feudalistic political misuse of power; a lack of government support in utilizing human resources; the insecure situation of working mothers' children.

III Psychological and Physical State

Definition:

Physical means the body itself while psychological refers to the mind's functions. Poor people have elevated levels of stress, and stress is linked to depression. Depression causes absenteeism and lower levels of productivity. People who are suffering from extreme stress and depression are less likely to make long-term investments in their health and education. They are more inclined to seek short-term rewards rather than long-term ones because they find it harder to delay gratification. These psychological effects of living in poverty make it more difficult for people to climb out of it.

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III Psychological and Physical State

Description:

Poverty has negative impacts on children's health, cognitive development, social, emotional and behavioral development, and educational outcomes. The parents of children living in poverty are more likely to suffer mental health problems, relationship problems, financial problems and substance misuse, which can affect their parenting behaviors, and which can have negative impacts on children's outcomes, too.

> **"After marriage, when there is no child, wives are always worried that the husband will marry another woman"**
> *- People in Poverty*

> *"We have to hear unexpected bad comments due to our physical disability"* - People in Poverty

> *"Poor people are always feeling helpless and guilty. They also feel less confident "* - Practitioners

> *"A bad relationship with the rich people in the community can bring trouble to the mind"* - Practitioners

> **"Both parents go outside for work to increase the family income, but there is no one who can take care of their children at home. They always have the feeling of insecurity"**
> **Academics**

Characteristics:

Feeling loneliness; parental thinking about their children's education; emotional turmoil; frustration; fear; hearing unexpected bad comments due to physical disabilities; a lack of confidence; due to extremely congested living conditions, sexual intimacy is missing, which causes bad tempers/inharmonious conditions; feeling bad because unable to meet the needs of the child; negligence of the wife; tension around whether the husband will get sick or not; the husband is thinking of marrying again; cannot do all the work due to being disabled; missing guardian for orphaned children; feeling bad because of staying in others' houses; local leaders don't listen to them when go to tell their problems to them; working as a house maid, but the house owner does not always behave well and often they don't get food; bad feelings about being an orphan; feeling helpless; doubts about how to pay off the installments on a loan; physical torture of wife; a lack of recreation.

> **"I have to suffer a lot of violence, stigma, harassment in society and also in my family because my husband was killed by tiger"**
> *- People in Poverty*

Lack of Entrepreneurship and Employment Opportunities

Definition:

Entrepreneurship can be a powerful means of poverty reduction for many reasons. First, it provides individuals with the tools to improve their own circumstances, as opposed to relying on aid from foreign governments or NGO's. Second, it gives people the means of achieving a sustainable income. Third, it improves overall economic growth which benefits all the citizens of a country. Creating job opportunities is one of the main responsibilities of the government. In most cases, people want to work but cannot find jobs, which creates poverty. Sometimes, due to lack of good governance and exclusion, poor people are deprived of employment opportunities.

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Lack of Entrepreneurship and Employment Opportunities

Description:

Entrepreneurship has a close connection with the alleviation of poverty. Entrepreneurship is believed to be an important mechanism of economic growth and development. Entrepreneurship increases productivity by bringing new innovations and speeding up structural changes by forcing existing business to reform and increase competition. But the poor people of Bangladesh do not have much opportunity to become entrepreneurs due to a lack of institutional and government support. Capital is necessary to be an entrepreneur, but without collateral a poor person cannot get a loan from a financial institution. For the poor, labour is often the only asset they can use to improve their well-being. Hence the creation of productive employment opportunities is essential for achieving poverty reduction and sustainable economic and social development. It is crucial to provide decent jobs that both secure income and empowerment for the poor, especially women and younger people. Employment opportunities are not available for the poor who are even being prevented from getting a job in open competition due to corruption, as well as institutional and social maltreatment.

"No opportunity for people to work on their skills. In Bangladesh, there are many people who have already gained skills, but have no chance to use them because there is no opportunity or place, like an industry, a company or institutions where they can work"

– Practitioners

"My husband's income is not enough for surviving. I know how to sew, but the situation of all people in this camp is so bad that they do not give any orders for sewing. Nobody even gives us an order for sewing from outside of the camp. I wanted to work in a tailor's shop. But I could not find any job. I want to work and help my husband" - People in Poverty

"A disabled person does not have sufficient work. Most people don't want a disabled employee. Also a disabled person has less opportunity to have higher education. Therefore, they do not get good jobs "
- People in Poverty

"A lack of entrepreneurship and employment opportunity is one of the main core reasons for a country's non-development. Because of less entrepreneurship and employment, many educated people do not have jobs."
- Practitioners

"Every year, many students complete their educations, but they do not get jobs, which is a big problem in our country."

– Academics

Characteristics:

Working in the field as day laborers when not getting any other jobs; low salary jobs; a lack of work /jobs despite being educated; internal migration because of missing job opportunities; no opportunity for people to work on their skills; a lack of skills development; entrepreneurs don't support people; a decrease in the work force; a lack of skilled labor; having no income to start a privately owned business.

Insufficient Transportation, Communication and Technology

Definition:

This dimension refers to the situation in which insufficient transportation, bad road conditions, a lack of good communication systems and insufficient technological knowledge affect poor people's daily lives negatively.

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Insufficient Transportation, Communication and Technology

Description:

Public transportation is necessary for the poor people of Bangladesh but transport is controlled by the private sector and government does not have much control over it. Therefore, poor people spend significant amounts of money for their trips to work and the burden of transport expenditures on poor people may be very high. Given the high cost of transport, the time taken by the poor to travel to work varies greatly. Poor people make fewer trips compared to non-poor people and often go on foot. On the other hand, village-level communication is very bad, which hinders agricultural activities. Sometimes, poor farmers cannot su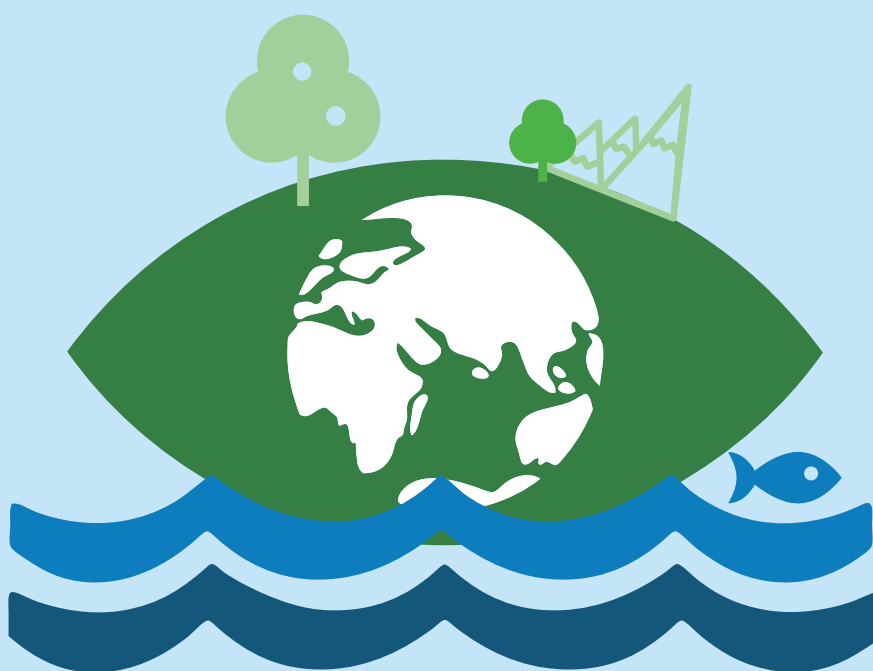pervise their fields properly, due to bad communication. Consequently, they are not getting the crops they expected. Insufficient new technology also negatively affects poor people. In Bangladesh, poor people mostly depend on agriculture, which is still based on a traditional system. Knowledge on new technology is limited, which impedes the production as well as the income of the poor. In addition, new technology is very expensive for individual poor farmers.

"We can't protest against injustice because we do not have enough access to our rights and information"

- People in Poverty

Characteristics:

Wants to work in any handcraft job or company, which is not possible in the villages; a lack of communication; road conditions are very bad; technological obstacles; a lack of safe roads; traffic jams; increasing transportation costs; the misuse of modern social media and technology.

"Lack of a proper road system for the disabled. A disabled person can't move on the road easily. For them, it's not easy to walk on the road or outside. "I use a wheelchair and with that I can't go on a small road. Big cars do not want to take us" - People in Poverty

"In our county, unskilled people get technology and they can't use it properly, so the government/company/industry does not profit from new technologies"
- Academics

"Because of increasing transportation costs, people are feeling pressure to produce any products. For instance, our farmers are always afraid about getting a fair price for their product"
- Academics

"The roads, especially those in local areas, are damaged every year, particularly in the rainy season. The roads are not repaired in a timely manner, so the local farmers cannot bring their crops to the market to sell them "
- Practitioners

"A lack of technical education and equipment. Due to the lack of technical education, our county is moving towards poverty. He also mentioned that some industries have new technology machines, but workers do not know how to operate them"
- Practitioners

24

Natural and Environmental Degradation

Definition:

Poverty and environmental issues are interlinked. Environmental problems cause severe suffering to the poor, i.e. poverty is influenced by climate change, different natural risks and various forms of pollution. Carbon emissions, the use of chemicals and pesticides, industrial pollution, sea-level rises create floods, droughts, salinity, increase temperatures, reduce habitats for biodiversity and augment the tiredness of the land. Poor people are most affected by these occurrences and poverty also increases through these environmental incidences.

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Natural and Environmental Degradation

Description:

Bangladesh faces a number of environmental problems due to its geographical location and setting, high density of population, poor socio-economic development, inefficient resource management and institutional framework. The diversity of its biological resources are also threatened by human intervention, through the destruction and degradation of the land, as well as denuded forest and aquatic habitats. In addition, climate change is creating severe poverty traps. Unless we address the climate change problem now, sustainable poverty reduction will remain a dream. People in poverty are more exposed to the negative consequences of this phenomenon and have no means to protect their families, livestock and other assets.

> **"Because of salinity, all the arable land (in the south of Bangladesh) is losing its ability to growing crops. We don't get enough crops from it. We don't have anything to eat or sell."**
>
> **- People in Poverty**

"Because of river erosion, we lost all of our land for cultivation and now we have to work in others' fields to gain our livelihood."
- People in Poverty

"Most of the natural resources are controlled by capitalism. That's why ordinary people don't get access to these resources." - Academics

"People are doing deforestation to collect wood for cooking purposes, because they want to save money compared to buying other fuels. "
- Practitioners
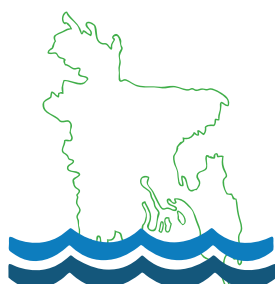
Characteristics:

Deterioration of the environmental situation (climate change); playing in a dirty environment; the lack of a healthy environment; salinity; water logging; cannot increase food production; use of pesticides and plastic; use of pesticides and plastic; use of extra chemical product; deforestation; environmental disasters due to competitive development; a lack of animal pasture land; river corrosion; cyclones; a lack of habitat for biodiversity; the restriction of natural resource utilization; the effect of climate change on agriculture etc.

> **"In the name of competitive development, people focus more on infrastructure than the environment, which is one of the causes for our loss of biodiversity."**
>
> **- Academics**

"Farmers using more chemicals in their land cultivation to make more profit which are very much dangerous for the climate and the land."
- Practitioners

Drug Addiction

Definition:

There is a long-standing belief that drug addiction and poverty go hand in hand. In some cases, poverty causes addiction and also the other way around. When people become excluded from the state, society and even family, they become upset and have more likely to be addicted in different ways. It is observed that, when someone doesn't have job or has little income to maintain their family, they may become mentally upset and fall into drug addiction.

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Description:

People with lower incomes or those who live in environments that are not conducive to economic growth, are more at risk of falling victim to drug abuse. The relationship between addiction and poverty is complicated. Lower income people are slightly more likely to struggle with drug or alcohol abuse, but this doesn't necessarily mean that poverty always causes addiction. In most cases, financial troubles are the result of a substance use disorder. In Bangladesh, worrying about how to afford shelter, food, and other basic needs causes a tremendous amount of mental stress and may lead to drug addiction. When poor people struggle to make ends meet, there is a great temptation to turn to drugs or alcohol to temporarily escape from such problems.

"My husband sells all the assets from our home to take drugs. We don't have anything valuable in our house." - People in Poverty

"Many people in our area are used to living with the drug business. Drugs are very much a part of our society, which is one of the core causes of increasing criminal activity and also family turmoil."
- People in Poverty

"People are getting involved in criminal activities like stealing, hijacking, snitching so that they can arrange to get their drug money." - Practitioners

"If children do not get money from their parents for doing drugs they became very much rebellious towards their families. They don't listen to their families anymore." - Academics

Characteristics:

Criminal vagabond activity; spend all their money on drugs; marijuana, heroin and other addictive products are available; beat wives when addicted' increased stealing; gambling; an addicted child doesn't listen to his parent etc.

"My boy steals my hard-earned money and savings to take drugs. All my efforts are going to waste."
- People in Poverty

Over Population

Definition:

Generally, overpopulation exerts great pressures on resources and land, leading to widespread environmental issues, in addition to impacting national economies and standards of living. Therefore, it is one of the leading causes of poverty in Bangladesh. Overpopulation creates excess demand for all commodities which hinders the standard of living of poor people.

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Description:

Although the population of a country is an asset, it becomes a burden when the country cannot provide people with basic necessities such as food, shelter, health care etc. High population growth is a burning concern in Bangladesh and a challenge to countries' economies. With an overexpanding population, economic hardship is aggravated and certainly one of main problems of Bangladesh. Due to overpopulation, resources are being overexploited and people excluded from their rights, which creates poverty. They are crowded everywhere, in buses, trains, markets, school and colleges. Poor people believe that 'more children earn more money' so they procreate children in their married lives. The area of Bangladesh is too small to support her population. Overpopulation creates nutritional food problems, especially for poor people. Thousands and thousands of people are out of work, many people sleep under the open sky, on the street, under a large tree and in rail stations. An increasing population pollutes the environment by making latrines on the bank of rivers and canals. A vast population also produces so much carbon-dioxide that it is a danger for the environment.

Characteristics:

When someone has many children, he cannot ensure education for all of those children; a lack of sports space; a lack of opportunities and space to meet physical needs; living in another's house; an unhealthy environment in slum areas; the amount of land per capita is less; child marriage due to many children; reduction of agricultural land.

"There are 2 families living in a very small room. A lack of opportunities and space to meet physical needs." - People in Poverty

"Most of the families have 5 or 6 children. Parents cannot afford to give clothes and educational opportunities to all of their children." - People in Poverty

"Due to the large population of the area, health care services have been hampered due to a lack of adequate doctors. " - Practitioners

"The economic development of any country depends on the structure and distribution of the country's population. If a population is greater than the country's resources, economic development is hampered." - Academics

Module 4: Children Group

The Bangladesh national research team in consultation with the international research team decided to work with the children group from both Urban and Rural areas of Bangladesh, and this was named Module-4. Bangladesh has a population of 160 million; 60 million or more than 37% of the total population are children (ages 0 – 14). A new report by UNICEF in Bangladesh found that 33 million children under 18 - around 56% of the child population - are currently living below the International Poverty Line. Over half of Bangladesh's children are living in poverty and there is widespread deprivation amongst them in the basic areas of food, sanitation and shelter, with limited ability to escape their circumstances, according to experts. In Bangladesh, education is free, and it is mandatory for children between 6 and 10 to attend school. However, child labourers, children with disabilities, native children etc. only rarely have access to education. Their right to education is not respected. Therefore, the Bangladeshi national research team decided to work with them to find out their experience and perception of poverty. Four (4) children peer groups from different parts of Bangladesh were selected by the national research team after several visits to the communities, meetings and assessments. These peer groups are as follows:

- *Kutupalong Rohingya Camp, Cox's Bazar*
- *SK Hospital Slum, Mymensingh*
- *Milon Night School for child labor, Jurain, Dhaka*
- *Mati School, Huzurikanda, Sherpur*
- *+ 1 Practitioner group*

Kutupalong Rohingya Camp, Cox's Bazar

Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh mostly refer to Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMNs) living in Bangladesh. For decades, the Rohingya people have experienced ethnic and religious persecution in Myanmar. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), more than 723,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh since 25 August 2017 and it has increased to 1.1 million in September 2018. In the refugee camps in Bangladesh, over 25% of Rohingya children are malnourished and over 12% are suffering from severe stunting, a condition resulting from starvation and malnutrition. Infants under 6 months are among the most vulnerable and have malnutrition rates near 50%.

SK Hospital Slum, Mymensingh

The slum is located behind the Mymensingh SK hospital which is locally known as 'Diarrhea and Cholera Hospital'. The people of this area are living there for the last 72 years. They came from different places of India (Kuchbihar, Ranarghat, Raypur, and Kaliyangonj) and are Hindu (Horizon) Their native language is Pochima. On the top of the caste hierarchy is the Brahman and at the bottom is the Untouchable (Dalit and Horizon). Same like Bins, (On the top of the caste hierarchy is the Brahman and at the bottom is the Untouchable (Dalit) and in between are the Kshatriya, the Vasya, and the Sudhra in a descending order. Bin's are part of Sudra) Horizons are never invited by others on any occasion of celebration. Their children cannot study in a good school. They cannot get a good and respectful job.

They are never hired for a good job just because of their Horizon background. Therefore, now they are not interested to send their children to school and encourage them to work. They are going back to their old profession which is Sweeper. Men barely want to marry a Horizon's daughter because of the Hindu caste system. Some of the Horizon girls getting married to Muslim guy change their religion. There are not enough sanitation facilities in the community area. Most of the time they have to face problems and diseases related to sanitation problem. There is a pre-school in the community which was established by a catholic brother who has been in Bangladesh for many years. This school is especially for the Horizon children who cannot go to school for the Hindu caste system. But children from other ethnic group can enroll in this school.

Milon Night School for child labor, Jurain, Dhaka

Child labor is a common phenomenon among the urban poor in the country and families often rely on income generating activities of their children. About 7.4 million children aged 5 to 17 years were working either in the economic or the domestic sector at the beginning of the last decade, often in hazardous working conditions. Working children are less likely to attend school and are often denied education, leisure and play entirely. HOPE'87 NGO in Bangladesh is running several so-called "Night Schools" in the slum areas of Dhaka, providing free-of-charge evening classes for working children. Other activities of the NGO focus on health care support for mothers and children, youth development and vocational training, as well as emergency response. Among the differ-

ent schools, the research team chose 'Milon Night School' in old Dhaka where children come from different communities and work in garments factories, motor garages, selling snacks in the streets, etc. These children work at day time and go to school at night.

Mati School, Huzurikanda, Sherpur

Huzurikanda is a remote, but densely populated village in Sherpur district of Bangladesh. About 70% of the adults are completely illiterate and 35% are chronically hungry, although they are producing food – for others. The lack of affordable education leads to the prevalence of the patriarchic, extremely conservative social structure, where women are de-facto second class citizens without rights. In Huzurikanda, 'MATI Primary School' was established in 1999 by MATI and nearly 300 students are getting benefits from the school.

In addition, a practitioner peer group was chosen including 8 practitioners from different NGOs and institutions working with children experiencing poverty.

Name of the NGO's: SUS (Sabalamby Unnayan Samity), GRAMAUS (Grameen Manobic Unnayan Sangstha), ASPADA (Agro-forestry Seed Production and Development Association), L'ARCHE (an international private voluntary organization that works for the creation and growth of homes, programs, and support networks with people who have intellectual disabilities) and MCC (Mennonite Central Committee).


29

Methodology

Four techniques were used in Module-1, 2 and 3 for the adult's peer groups but these techniques were not appropriate for the children. Therefore, research team used another three techniques which were easily understandable to the children.

1.　　　Free art/painting
2.　　　Good side bad side with some specific questions
3.　　　Theater Play (no voice/dialogue)

Main findings from Module-4 (children)

Following all scientific steps of Merging of Knowledge (MoK), research team has found 10 dimensions of poverty from the 4 children's peer groups and the practitioner peer group.
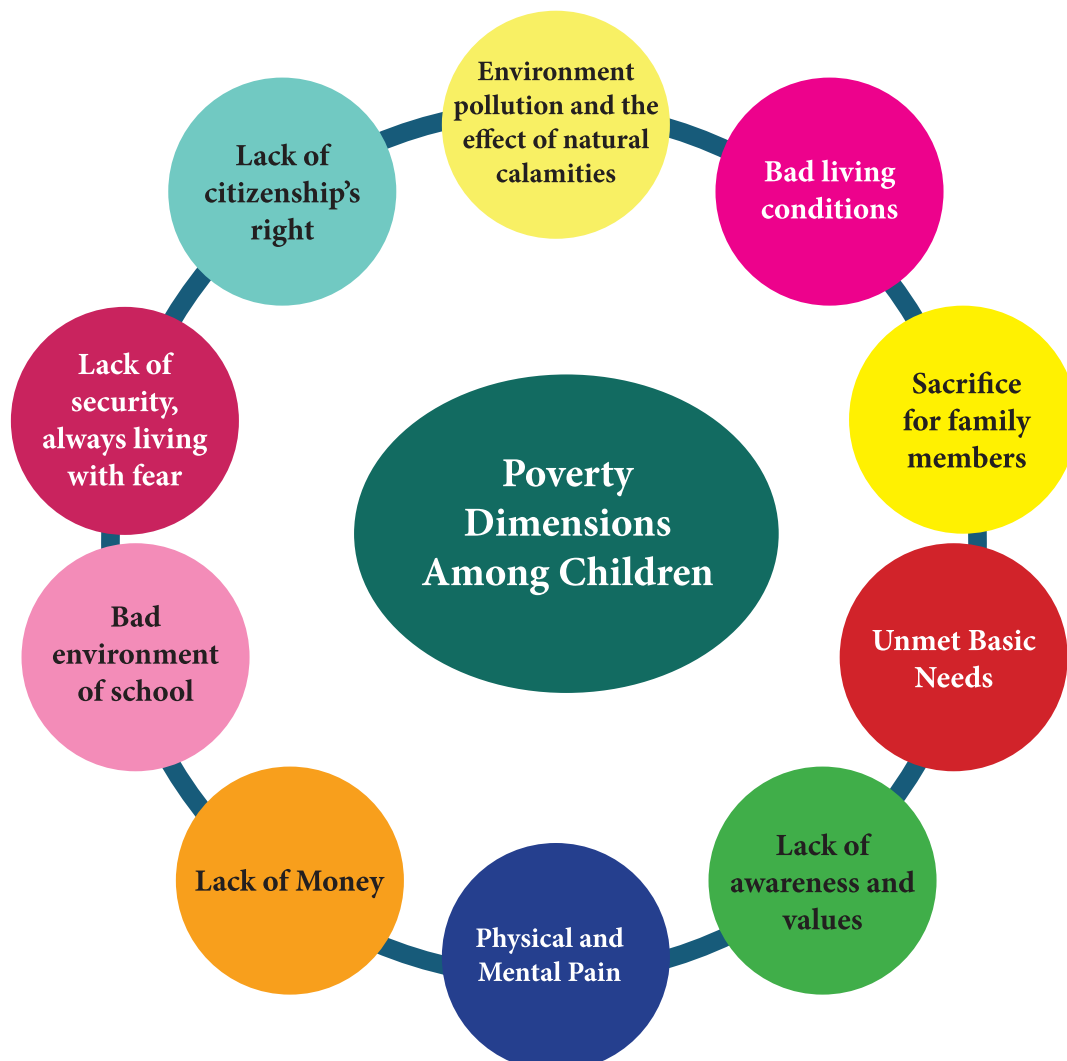
Poverty Dimensions Among Children

Environment pollution and the effect of natural calamities:

Garbage is all around, smell of garbage and cigarettes, crops damaged in heavy rain and flood, houses destroyed in flood and cyclone, fields are flooded, playgrounds as well so they cannot be used to play.

Bad living conditions:

Broken house, old ceiling of the house lead to dust falling in the eyes, high temperature makes corrugated tin house uncomfortable to live in, no electricity at home, no good furniture's at home, too many people live in a small place.

Sacrifice for family members:

Mother works in other house; children have to take care of the young sister and brother, work to support the sibling's education with money I earn, being asked (all the time) to leave education for work in order to contribute to the family expenses.

Unmet Basic Needs:

Lack of good food, sometimes no food at home, sister died because of lack of nutrition, lack of medical facilities, no sufficient clothes at winter, cannot go to school timely because of having to do manual work.

Lack of awareness and values:

People have bad manners due to lack of awareness, we don't get help when being sick, rich people neglect the poor people.

Physical and Mental Pain:

Wants to spend time with father but cannot because parents work outside the whole day, lack of love and affection, harsh behavior of step-mother, don't like the quarrels of parents, painful to see the tears of parents, no one in the family listens to me, children marriage, cannot fulfill my hobby.

Lack of Money:

Build houses by taking loans, working in others' land, labor or Borga (tenant farming), less opportunities for women and girls to get work, can't buy stuff for make-up, no good looking cloth, lack of entertainment.

Bad environment of school:

Lack of quality education in the school, don't like shouting of the children in the school, feel afraid because there is no light in the toilet of the school, broken benches of the classroom.

Lack of security, always living with fear:

Cows are stolen away, no security in the street, parents don't allow me to go outside, afraid that the teacher will give punishment, always remaining in fear of being attacked by military, could not sleep at night due to fear.

Lack of citizenship's right:

Many women and girls have been tortured and abused, no right to study, have to pay hostage money to get release of family member, hard (for Rohingya people) to go in another area to study, lost property and ended up on the street due to migration.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion and recommendations

The findings of this international research demonstrate that genuine participation of people living in poverty in cooperation with others is possible in international research and generates new insights. A majority of the participants involved in the research in Bangladesh noted that in part because of the Merging of Knowledge methodology, everyone's experience and opinion could be valued and considered in equal measure. Participants also noted that the methodology enabled them to understand new aspects of poverty which had not occurred to them prior to engaging with people from such different backgrounds.

The international research work summarizes several major findings, providing a clear account of the multidimensional nature of poverty in Bangladesh. Further, many of the factors associated with poverty were identified to be closely interdependent. Beyond the more familiar attributes related to housing conditions, work, health, food, financial security, etc., this work highlights a number of less recognized aspects of poverty that were identified by the research groups, many of which are rarely considered in descriptions of poverty or captured in current multi dimensional poverty indices.

One consideration concerns the way people are treated by others, including across wider society, its services and institutions. Another relates to the psychological and physical suffering people living in poverty experience due to permanent tension brought about from their daily struggle to survive and the continued neglect of their efforts to make a better life for themselves.

Research findings on the multiple dimensions of poverty thus offer lessons for formulating policies both in Bangladesh and more generally across developing countries. Research outcomes can also be used to explore ways poverty reduction efforts led by development agencies and government can be made more effective. On the other hand, various economic policies aimed at addressing poverty in all its forms may not ultimately be successful if a multiple dimensions framework is overlooked, leading to questions about their overall effectiveness.

Future work on these newly identified dimensions of poverty in Bangladesh will require government policymakers and regulators to conduct a thorough analysis of the pros and cons associated with the research outcomes. In this connection research outcomes should be shared more widely with different government bodies and institutions. However, it cannot be said that existing policy failures are merely the consequence of inaccurate results or errors in datas on global poverty reduction efforts over the decades.

Encouraging the inclusion of people living in poverty and their participation in various policies and programs, including in the design and decision making process has yet to be fully carried out by those working in the development sector.

Without identifying and addressing these concerns, achieving socioeconomic well-being in many developing countries will remain an elusive goal.

Appendix-I: NRT of Bangladesh

S.N.	Name	Research Team Position	Gender	age group
1	Lenen Rahaman	Coordinator	m	40+
2	Andrea Rahaman	Coordinator	f	
3	Pro. Fakir Azmal Huda	Academic Person	m	40+
4	Dr. Akhtaruzzaman Khan	Academic Person	m	40+
5	Marzina Akter Borsha	NGO Activist MATI	f	25+
6	Sajia Kadir Khan	NGO Activist MATI	f	25+
7	Md. Shams Uddin	Accompanier	m	45+
8	Md. Samiur Rahman Khan	Research Assistant	m	30+
9	Rafiqul Islam	Person with direct experience of poverty	m	40+
10	Mridha Shihab Mahmud	Freelancer, Journalist, NGO Activist	m	27+
11	Rajon Bin	Person with direct experience of poverty, repr. Hindu/ethnic minorities	m	40+
12	Jalal Uddin	Co-facilitator, Person with direct experience from Poverty	m	20+
13	Ruksana Akter	Student, Person with direct experience from Poverty	f	18
14	Shahina Akter	Student, Person with direct experience from Poverty	f	20
15	Tahmina Akter	Person with direct experience of poverty	f	40+

Appendix-II: Rural poverty dimensions in Bangladesh

Sl. no.	Name of dimension
1	Mental Stress and Tension
2	Education and Good Care
3	Health and Treatment Facilities
4	Income/Money
5	Assets and Property
6	Lack of Entrepreneurship and Employment Opportunities
7	Insufficient Transportation, Communication and Technology
8	Bad Governance
9	Nutritious Food
10	Natural and Environmental Degradation

Appendix-III: Urban poverty dimensions in Bangladesh

Sl. no.	Name of dimension
1	Unmet Basic Needs
2	Employment and Money
3	Defective Social State
4	Good Governance
5	Political Instability
6	Physical and Psychological State
7	Environment and Climate Change
8	Drug Addiction
9	Overpopulation

Appendix-IV: Merged dimensions from rural and urban peer groups

Dimensions of Module 2 (Rural)	Dimensions of Module 3 (Urban)	Merged Dimension
• Education and Good Care • Health and Treatment Facilities • Assets and Property • Nutritious Food	• Unmet Basic Needs	• Unmet Basic Needs
• Income/Money	• Employment and Money	• Insufficient Money
• Bad Governance	• Defective Social State • Good Governance • Political Instability	• Bad Governance and Political and Social Instability
• Mental Stress and Tension	• Physical and Psychological State	• Ill Physical and Psychological State
• Lack of Entrepreneurship and Employment Opportunities		• Lack of Entrepreneurship and Employment Opportunities
• Insufficient Transportation, Communication and Technology		• Insufficient Transportation, Communication and Technology
• Natural and Environmental Degradation	• Environment and Climate Change	• Natural and Environmental Degradation
	• Drug Addiction	• Drug Addiction
	• Over Population	• Over Population

International outcomes circle
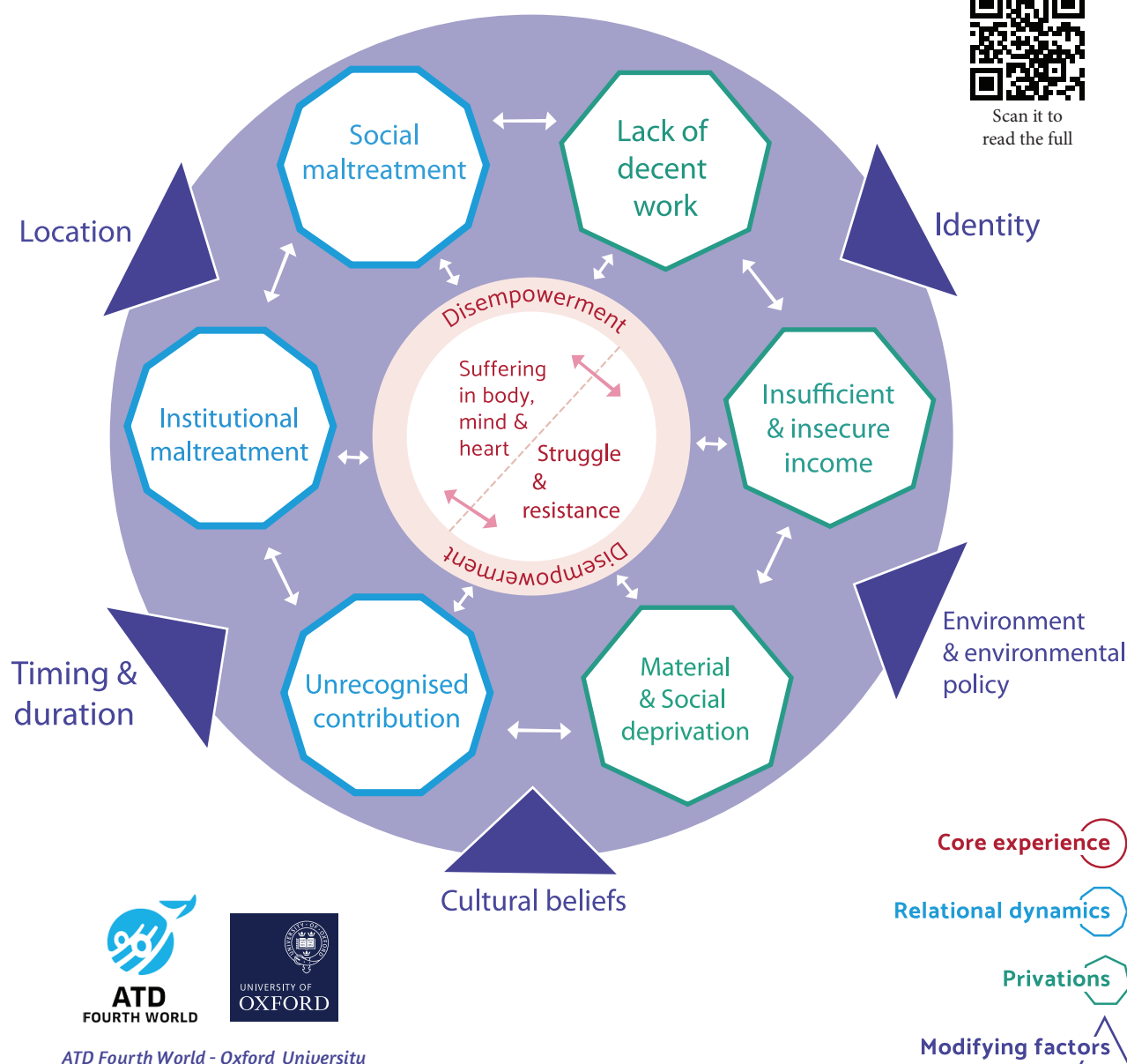## The hidden dimensions of poverty

International participatory research led by
ATD Fourth World and the University of Oxford

This is the international merged findings from research that has sought to refine the understanding and measurement of poverty by engaging with people directly experiencing poverty, practitioners, and academics.

The research has involved teams in Bangladesh, Bolivia, France, Tanzania, the United Kingdom and the United States. People with direct experience of poverty, academics and practitioners, worked together as equals. The research process – termed Merging of Knowledge has made possible a transformation in thinking at individual, community and national levels through the generation and sharing of knowledge.

Scan it to read the full

ATD Fourth World – Oxford University
diagram on the dimensions of poverty, January 2019

Mati

Mati is an organization that aims to join all its human forces, energy, and love in the universal fight against poverty and towards a life in dignity for all human beings, regardless of gender, status, color or creed. Mati's general approach is to question development theories that do not take individual people and their personal life stories into account.

The University of Oxford

The University of Oxford is one of the leading universities in the world. It is a collegiate research university in Oxford, England. There is evidence of teaching as early as 1096, making it the oldest university in the English-speaking world and the world's second-oldest university in continuous operation.

AFD (Agence Française de Développement)

The Agence Française de Développement (AFD) funds, supports and accelerates the transitions to a fairer and more sustainable world.
Focusing on climate, biodiversity, peace, education, urban development, health and governance, our teams carry out more than 4,000 projects in France's over-seas departments and territories and another 115 countries. In this way, we contribute to the commitment of France and French people to support the sustainable development goals.

ATD Fourth World

ATD (All Together in Dignity) Fourth World is a movement of solidarity among and in collaboration with the most excluded families around the world. Founded in 1957 by Joseph Wresinski, ATD Fourth World brings together women and men from all cultures and social classes and is active in 34 countries.
It is an international non-governmental organization with no religious or political affiliation