



Participatory Assessment of Development

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Langbinsi info sheet, no.3

Impact of project on wealth groups – Agnieszka Kazimierczuk

The main aim of this research was to find out whether a prolonged stay and more in-depth research in one of the PAdDev workshop locations would yield very different insights than the 3-day workshop. The focus of the study was on wealth groups. In the workshops that were organized in the framework of the PAdDev project, it was attempted to let representatives of all wealth groups participate. Agnieszka Kazimierczuk found out that in practice there was a bias towards higher and middle class participants. The local poor and very poor rarely participated.

Agnieszka attempted more actively to reach the poor. She organized nine workshops: six with adults and three with children aged 12-18. The workshops were less formal and smaller than the main PAdDev workshop held in 2008. However, even in this setup, it was impossible to overcome the dominating power relations that lead to social exclusion of the poor and very poor. The participants in the smaller workshop were mostly 'average', but not poor (for a description of these categories, see info sheet 4).

A first implication of the over-representation of the average, rich and very rich was that the projects mentioned as the 'best five' tended to benefit the rich more than the poor. Secondly, some projects that benefited the poor were only mentioned in the list of projects when the group consisted of average households and mainly was added by school children.

Despite the fact that for many school children the word "development project" meant that "*Some strangers came and gave/did/etc*", including voices of the school children is noteworthy. In the classroom, the representatives of the several wealth groups (incl. the poor) are present and the power relations seemed weaker than among the adults. Children added also many projects which benefited them directly and which would be otherwise assessed. It is clearly very difficult for researchers like us, but also for NGOs and other agencies, to include people who are actively excluded by other members of society. And even if the poor and very poor would participate in workshops like ours, it would be very difficult for them to contribute to the discussions which are dominated by local elites.

It should be noted that on a global scale, even the rich and average in Northern Ghana can be considered as poor, and the positive impact of development projects on their lives certainly is also a contribution to the development of this very poor region. Development projects that do not succeed to reach the (ultra) poor in a poor region are not „bad projects“, which „failed“. They only failed if their explicit intention had been to reach/include the (very) poor in that particular area.

Full reference: Kazimierczuk, A. (2009). *Participatory Poverty Assessment and Participatory Evaluation of the Impact of Development Projects on Wealth Categories in Northern Ghana*. MA Thesis, University of Amsterdam.

