

RANKING THE DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY THAT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED FIRST TO BRING THE GREATEST IMPROVEMENT IN THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY

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Abstract: *This study aimed to determine the most important dimensions of poverty that should be addressed first to improve the quality of life of people living in poverty. The study used quantitative and qualitative methods, with people in poverty participating as co-researchers on an equal footing with academics and practitioners. A "pair-wise comparison" tool was used to rank the dimensions of poverty. According to the study, the first dimension that should be addressed is Poor Quality Education, followed by Ill Health and deficiencies in implementing institutional policies. Vulnerability to Harmful Social Behavior ranked third, followed by Income Poverty and Tradition and Cultural Practices. Finally, the Constraint of Smallholder Agriculture Livelihood ranked fifth. The study recommends that since some dimensions have a more significant impact than others on the lives of people in poverty and since the government or development partners do not have enough resources to deal with all dimensions at once, it is recommended to tackle first the dimensions that have the most significant improvement in the quality of lives of people in poverty.*

Key Words: *Ranking, people in poverty, dimensions with the most significant improvement of life, participatory, Tanzania*

INTRODUCTION

Faced with persistent poverty worldwide, the United Nations 2030 Agenda recognizes that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development (United Nations, 2019; United Nations, 2023). Poverty eradication was subsequently adopted into the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 by the 193 countries of the United Nations General Assembly (United Nations, 2019). Its seven associated targets aim, among others, to eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere and reduce by at least half the proportion of men, women, and children of all ages living in poverty (United Nations, 2019).

The phrase "poverty in all its forms and dimensions" has been used to indicate poverty reduction in various ways. However, it has never been officially defined (Bray *et al.*, 2020). Despite this, Target 1.2 and Indicator 1.2.2 continue to use the phrase and highlight that it should be understood according to national definitions (United Nations, 2019). This implies that apart from multidimensional poverty, it is also specific to different regions or countries. Therefore, each nation or country must identify the dimensions of poverty and develop strategies to measure progress in combating poverty (UNICEF, 2017).

Historically, Tanzania's strategies to fight against poverty focused on the "Three enemies of development," namely "poverty, ignorance,

and disease,” as spelled by the Father of the Nations, the late Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere, soon after independence (Kuhanga, 2000). A critical analysis of Nyerere’s three enemies of development reveals that he was referring to traditional dimensions of poverty (ATD, Tanzania, 2019; Wetengere *et al.*, 2022). Traditionally, poverty has been measured in one dimension, usually income (Santos & Alkire, 2011), referring to insufficient money to meet the necessities of life (Wetengere *et al.*, 2022). So, by poverty, Nyerere was referring to income poverty. However, despite the dominance of income as a measure of poverty, it has been realized that poverty is for the ‘poor people’, more than lack of income (Narayan *et al.*, 2000). In support of the above, the United Nations (2023) recognizes that poverty is not just a lack of money. It is a trap. It is poor health, sub-standard or no education, and lack of political power.

That means poverty is multidimensional; therefore, to address it, the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) was developed in 2010 (Santos & Alkire, 2011). The MPI comprises three dimensions: education, health, and living standards (Santos & Alkire, 2011). This multidimensional measure “offered an essential complement to income poverty indices because it measures and compares deprivations directly.” That means Nyerere’s ignorance, which describes a lack of knowledge, understanding, or information about something, results from a lack of or poor quality education (Kuhanga, 2000). Further, Nyerere’s disease results from poor health (Wetengere *et al.*, 2022). So, Nyerere’s three enemies of development are just different dimensions of poverty as it is shown in this paper.

Despite progress in Tanzania, poverty remains a problem affecting a significant proportion of the population. The Tanzania Household Budget Survey from 2017/18 revealed that 26.4 percent or 16 million out of 61 million people live in poverty. This is defined as those who

cannot meet their basic needs because they earn below the national poverty line of TZS 49,320 per adult per month (World Bank, 2018). Likewise, the World Bank (2021) found that four out of five people below the international poverty line lived in rural areas. Moreover, the nation faces ‘new worst enemies,’ namely corruption, embezzlement, and mismanagement of the nation’s resources (The Guardian, 2010). Over the past decade, the ‘new enemies’ have thrived, and the fact that some dimensions of poverty have a greater impact on other dimensions, there is a danger that if the ‘new enemies’ are not dealt with well, will make it difficult to fight against poverty, as spelled out by Mwalimu Julius Nyerere during independence (The Guardian, 2010).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Participatory Approaches to Poverty

One of the reasons why efforts to eliminate extreme poverty have not been successful is that people living in poverty are often excluded from participating in defining the various aspects of poverty and how it affects them. This has been highlighted by several studies, such as those conducted by CHR (2012), Wetengere *et al.* (2022), and Bray *et al.* (2020). Efforts to tackle poverty have led to the adoption of participatory approaches that incorporate the perspectives of individuals living in poverty. Beginning in 1972, the Participatory Approach to Research (PAR) was implemented in various coastal villages in Tanzania to involve residents in the government's development initiatives (Swantz, 2015). Other studies include the World Bank’s Voices of the Poor project (Narayan *et al.*, 2000) and research involving fieldwork across six countries to develop the Individual Deprivation Measure (Bessell, 2015; Weser, 2014).

Although the studies mentioned above aimed to be inclusive, they did not involve impoverished people in the analytical decision-making process. As a result, they failed to incorporate the perspectives of the most marginalized

population, omitting them from defining the dimensions of poverty. This shortcoming prevented exploring the lived experience of poverty as a valuable empirical source to guide policy, research, and practice (Wetengere et al., 2024). To achieve the goal of eradicating poverty as outlined in the SDGs, it is crucial to involve people living in poverty as equal partners throughout the process, including study design, governance, operation, analysis, and dissemination (Fricker, 2007). This approach values their expertise and recognizes their status as knowledgeable individuals, ultimately achieving a shared mandate (Patrick, 2019). Therefore, this paper reflects on the possibilities offered by Merging of Knowledge, an approach to research and practice initiated and developed in the social movement ATD Fourth World.

Merging of Knowledge and its contribution to poverty alleviation

The Merging of Knowledge (MoK) is a process that promotes equality by facilitating a dialogue between people living in poverty and professionals (Wodon, 2018; ENGAGE, 2021). MoK aims to involve people with firsthand experience of poverty as co-researchers, working alongside experts on poverty, academics, policy-makers, business leaders, social workers, and teachers. This collaboration ensures that policy formation and action are informed by the perspectives of impoverished people (Wetengere et al., 2024). The research process is structured to disrupt traditional power hierarchies, providing an alternative interaction platform for understanding and addressing poverty.

The underlying proposition is that knowledge derived from different peer groups differs and, though equally valid and vital, knowledge born from lived experience differs from professional experience or academics (CHR, 2012; Bray et al., 2020). While people experiencing poverty have lived in poverty and expressed what touches their lives most,

academics/researchers, and welfare employees/practitioners have only been informed about poverty in various ways (Wresinski, 1980; Wetengere et al., 2022). So, the differences in knowledge show differences in experience and interpretation of the surroundings/world.

Dimensions of Poverty Identified

As a result of employing MoK through which people with direct experience of poverty with academics and practitioners were actively involved, a total of 13 dimensions were determined (ATD Tanzania 2019; Wetengere et al., 2022). Of the dimensions, 3 were traditional or commonly known, and 10 were hidden dimensions (ibid.).

(i) Tradition or commonly known dimensions of poverty

These dimensions are commonly known but still impact people's lives, especially those with direct experience of poverty (ATD Tanzania 2019; Wetengere et al., 2022). These dimensions are covered under the Alkire-Foster Multidimensional Poverty Index and have been used by the United Nations Development Programme since 2010 (Godinot & Walker, 2020; OPHI, 2021). This multidimensional measure “complements income poverty indices because it measures and compares deprivations directly.” However, these dimensions do not fully reflect the experiences and views of impoverished people (Godinot & Walker, 2020; OPHI, 2021).

The common or traditional dimensions (ATD Tanzania, 2019; Wetengere et al., 2022) are;

- **Poor Quality Education:** Denotes the type of education that does not provide skills and knowledge to help individuals become creative and independent in the struggle against poverty (see also CONCERN, 2022);
- **Ill Health:** Refers to poor physical or mental conditions that give rise to health problems (ibid); and

- **Income Poverty:** Means having insufficient income to meet basic needs and social obligations, maintain harmony within the family, or enjoy good living conditions.

(ii) The hidden dimensions of poverty

These are dimensions that all peer groups have mentioned as having a significant impact on their lives but largely overlooked by many researchers (ATD Tanzania, 2019). These are well-known to sociologists, ethnologists, and even economists (Walker & Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 2014; Lister, 2015) but they are considered hidden because they have gone unrecognized in the sense that they have not been considered seriously by developing indicators such as \$1.9 a day or Human Poverty Index (HPI) or Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) (OPHI, 2021; Godinot & Walker, 2020). For that reason, these dimensions have not been considered in policy discussions. So, how they interact to shape the experience of poverty has not been adequately understood.

The hidden dimensions (ATD Tanzania, 2019; Wetengere *et al.*, 2022) include:

- **Poor Environment and Indecent Shelter:** Refers to poor places where people in poverty live and the types of shelters they possess;
- **Solidarity of People living in Poverty:** Denotes coping strategies employed by people living in poverty to help one another materially or morally in times of need;
- **Violence, Abuse, and Exploitation of Women and Children:** Describes the way women and children are treated in society, mainly when the situation is linked with poverty;
- **Vulnerability to Harmful Social Behaviors:** Explains how people in poverty are more likely to be affected and suffer from bad conduct at an individual, family, or society level;

- **Traditional and Cultural Practices:** Harmful traditional and cultural practices reflect values and beliefs held by members of a community for periods often spanning generations ;
- **Deficiencies in Implementing Institutional Policies:** Deficiency in implementing institutional policies to meet people's needs;
- **Constraints to Smallholders' Agricultural Livelihoods:** Obstacles facing smallholder farmers in rural areas that prevent them from benefiting from agricultural ventures;
- **Discrimination and Social Exclusion:** Describes how people living in poverty are denied opportunities to participate in economic, social, political, and cultural activities in society;
- **Absence of Protection, Parental, and Community Care:** Explains how children from families in poverty are not protected and cared for by parents and the community; and
- **Poverty-Related Psychological Effects:** Poverty-related psychological effects directly result from extreme poverty caused by hardship and suffering.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Ranking the Importance of Dimensions of Poverty

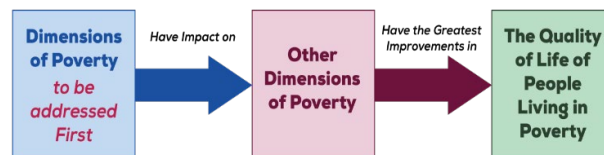
Determining the dimensions of poverty country by country is crucial for implementing policies to eradicate poverty (United Nations, 2019). However, it is equally important to rank these dimensions based on their impact on the lives of impoverished people. Studies by ATD Tanzania (2019) and Wetengere & Saasita (2022) have shown that some dimensions have a greatest impact on improvement in the quality of life of people living in poverty than others. It is crucial to address these dimensions first as they have a ripple effect on other dimensions and ultimately improve the overall quality of life of people living in poverty. If these critical

dimensions are not identified and addressed first, they may hinder efforts to fight against poverty (ATD Tanzania, 2019; Wetengere & Saasita, 2022). This could be one of the reasons why previous attempts to combat poverty have been unsuccessful.

Ranking different dimensions of poverty answers the question, “Which dimension of poverty would bring greater improvement in quality of life if tackled first?” The premise underlying ranking the dimensions of poverty based on its impact on other dimensions is that governments and development partners do not have enough resources to deal with all dimensions simultaneously. So, to eradicate different dimensions of poverty, it would be appropriate to start with those dimensions that would bring greater improvement in the quality of life *if tackled first*. This strategy aligns with CONCERN’s (2023) finding, which revealed that “Access to quality education is globally recognized as a solution to the cycle of poverty. This is partly because improving education addresses many other issues that keep communities vulnerable.”

It is important to note that not all dimensions of poverty have the same impact on people, especially those living in poverty. Different dimensions of poverty affect people living in poverty differently. To determine which dimensions should be addressed first to improve the quality of life of people with direct experience in poverty, it was essential to rank the dimensions of poverty with the help of academics and practitioners. This ranking was done in collaboration with people living in poverty in studies done by ATD Tanzania (2019) and by Wetengere and Saasita (2022).

Figure 1: Ranking the dimensions of poverty that should be addressed first to bring about the greatest improvement in the quality of life of the people living in poverty



Sources: Researchers’ Study (2024)

The Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study was to rank the dimensions of poverty with people living in poverty, academics, and practitioners according to their importance in the life of the people. More specifically, the dimensions were ranked based on which dimensions should be addressed first to bring the greatest improvement in the quality of life of the people living in poverty.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Research Design

This research utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods. A qualitative method was used to facilitate peer group discussions and the merging of knowledge, while the quantitative method was used to rank the dimensions of poverty with numerical data. The study employed a phenomenological design to understand better how people living in poverty perceive poverty. Furthermore, the Delphi technique was used to identify a consensus view across poverty experts (peer groups) to answer research questions.

The Population Involved in Ranking of the Dimensions of Poverty

The people who conducted the ranking exercise comprised two categories which included:

- (i). *People living in poverty:*
 - Men and women of working age.
- (ii). *People not living in poverty:*
 - Practitioners; and
 - Academics.

Sampling Technique

The study used purposive sampling to select representative zones, regions, districts, villages, and the study population (ATD Tanzania, 2019). Maximum variation sampling included zones, regions, districts, and villages representing the study area. Also, expert sampling was used to identify individuals with extensive knowledge about poverty who could offer valuable insights into the underlying causes of the issue.

Identification of peer groups

People living in poverty were identified by the local village leaders who knew where they lived. The identification was done in collaboration with the ATD Tanzania Team and friends of ATD living and working in the areas. The identified participants had to meet the project criteria: minimum assets, income, means of production, and education. During the verification phase, a few selected participants who did not meet the project criteria were dropped. Those who met the requirements were asked to sign a consent form to confirm participation. The ATD Tanzania team used a similar method to identify and approach practitioners and academics selected based on their professional roles and to achieve a mix of genders.

Empowerment of the ATD TNRT

After the identification and recruitment of the ATD TNRT were completed, the team went through a series of training within and outside the office. The training was meant to empower the team members, particularly those living in poverty, to unite and solidify the team, build confidence and trust within and across the peer groups, and remove the fear of self-expression within and across the peer groups. The underlying premise is that without confidence, trust, and fearlessness among members, particularly those living in poverty, members would not be sincere in expressing their

experience about poverty (Skelton & Kalisa, 2017).

Sample Size

The ATD TNRT, comprising 12 members, 6 people in poverty, 3 practitioners, and 3 academics, conducted a ranking and merging of dimensions of poverty according to their importance.

Data Collecting Instruments

Since the dimensions of poverty were already determined, the task of the peer groups was to rank the dimensions of poverty based on the dimensions that should be tackled first to bring about the greatest impact on the lives of the people in poverty (ATD Tanzania, 2019). The ranking was done by each peer group doing the ranking separately, then discussing their ranking with other peer groups, and then coming up with one ranking list. The discussion helped the participants generate knowledge, enabling the members to rank the dimensions of poverty.

Other methods employed for data collection were literature and documents, narratives or quotes of life stories on people's experiences with poverty, and recordings and transcriptions.

Data Analysis

Since each peer group ranked dimensions separately and then came together to merge the rankings of different peer groups, the ATD TNRT cross-checked their reliability and validity to identify overlaps, contradictions, and inconsistencies. This was done by cross-referencing with relevant peer groups, referring to secondary data, and reviewing notes and transcriptions made by team members. Data analysis involved writing notes and checking the recurring themes or issues from different peer groups and secondary data. In addition, the ATD TNRT shared their field experiences to note down common issues to complement the descriptive data collected from impoverished individuals.

Knowledge of ranking generated from the peer groups was 'merged' through analysis, discussion, and reflection within the ATD TNRT, with an emergent list of ranking agreed by all peer groups. After the final ranking, the ATD TNRT analyzed the outcomes from the peer groups: members of the ATD TNRT with direct experience of poverty made a thorough analysis to see if their views were reflected in the final ranking; the practitioners and academics did the same. These three syntheses were necessary for the deliberations towards the ranking of joint production of one single list of ranking of dimensions of poverty.

The merging of ranked dimensions from each peer group exercise lasted for 1 to 2 days. The team then carried out an analysis considering the new data produced during this event. The result of this process was not only a list of ranking of dimensions but also new, enriched insights about the reality of poverty from different peer groups in each studied area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ranking the Dimensions of Poverty

The ATD TNRT, consisting of six people with experience of poverty, three academics, and three practitioners, determined thirteen dimensions of poverty. These dimensions were then ranked separately by each peer group of the ATD TNRT, and their opinions were taken on which dimensions of poverty should be addressed first to bring about the most significant improvement in the quality of life of people living in poverty. The three peer groups then merged the dimensions according to the above-mentioned criteria, and a list was formed, as indicated in Table 1. The results showed the most pressing dimensions of poverty that need to be addressed first.

Ranking the dimensions of poverty that should be addressed first to bring about the greatest improvement in the quality of life of the people living in poverty

This exercise aimed to rank the dimensions of poverty that should be addressed first to improve the quality of life of the people in poverty (ATD Tanzania, 2019). To carry out this exercise, each peer group separately (people in poverty, academics, and practitioners) compared each dimension against every other one. This process adopted *pair-wise comparison* (ATD Tanzania, 2019). For instance, when two dimensions (say, X and Y) were compared, the peer group members asked *which dimension would bring greater improvement in quality of life, tackling dimension X or Y?* (*ibid.*) If the answer is dimension Y, it means tackling dimension Y would have a greater impact on life than tackling dimension X (ATD Tanzania, 2019).

As indicated in Table 1, each peer group compared Poor Quality Education (PQE) against every other dimension horizontally. The dimension that a peer group considered as having a greater impact on the life of the people living in poverty when addressed first was written in the table. For instance, from Table 1, when dimension PQE was compared with dimension Ill Health (IH), dimension PQE was considered as a dimension having a more significant impact on the life of the people living in poverty; dimension PQE was written in column three row two from above. The second column remains blank since dimension PQE cannot be compared with itself. The same exercise was conducted for every other dimension.

After each peer group had completed this exercise, the three groups came together to discuss and merge their results and came up with one list, as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Dimension of Poverty that Should Be Addressed First to Bring About the Greatest Improvement in the Quality of Life

	PGE	IH	IP	PEIS	SPP	VAE	VHS	TCP	DIP	CSA	DSE	APC	PPE	Total	Rank
PQE		PQE	PQE	PQE	PQE	PQE	PQE	PQE	PQE	PQE	PQE	PQE	PQE	12	1
IH			IH	PEIS	IH	IH	IH	IH	IH	IH	IH	IH	IH	10	2
IP				IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	DIP	CSA	DSE	IP	IP	7	4
PEIS					PEIS	VAE	VHS	TCP	DIP	CSA	DSE	APC	PPE	2	9
SPP						VAE	VHS	TCP	DIP	CSA	DSE	APC	PPE	0	10
VAE							VHS	TCP	DIP	VAE	DSE	VAE	PPE	4	7
VHS								VHS	DIP	VHS	VHS	VHS	VHS	8	3
TCP									DIP	TCP	TCP	TCP	TCP	7	4
DIP										DIP	DIP	DIP	DIP	10	2
CSA											CSA	CSA	CSA	6	5
DSE												DSE	DSE	5	6
APC													APC	3	8
PPE														3	8

Source: ATD Tanzania (2021)

Abbreviations:

- PQE** Poor Quality Education;
- IH** Ill Health;
- IP** Income Poverty;
- PEIS** Poor Environment and Indecent Shelter;
- SPP** Solidarity of People Living in Poverty;
- VAE** Violence, Abuse, and Exploitation against Women and Children;
- VHS** Vulnerability to Harmful Social Behavior;
- TCP** Tradition and Culture Practices;
- DIP** Deficiencies in the Implementation of Institution Policies;
- CSA** Constraint of Smallholder's Agriculture Livelihood;
- DSE** Discrimination and Social Exclusion;
- APC** Absence of Protection, Parental and Community Care; and
- PPE** Poverty-Related Psychological Effects.

Table 1 shows that the five high-ranked dimensions of poverty that should be addressed first to bring about the greatest improvement in the quality of life of people living in poverty are:

1. Poor Quality Education;
2. Ill Health & Deficiencies in Implementation of Institution Policies;

3. Vulnerability to Harmful Social Behavior;
4. Income Poverty & Tradition and Culture Practices; and
5. The Constraint of Smallholder's Agriculture Livelihood.

Out of the five top dimensions that should be addressed first to bring about the greatest improvement in the quality of life, all traditional dimensions were mentioned: Poor Quality Education was ranked first, Ill Health ranked second, and Income Poverty ranked fourth. The rest were hidden dimensions: Deficiencies in implementing Institution Policies were ranked second, Vulnerability to Harmful Social Behavior ranked third, Traditional and Cultural practices ranked fourth, and the Constraint of Smallholder's Agriculture Livelihood was ranked fifth. This finding reveals that if policymakers continue relying on traditional dimensions to fight poverty, the hidden dimensions may hinder efforts to fight against poverty.

The Impact of Improved Education on Other Dimensions:

Poor quality education was ranked first as a dimension that should be tackled first to bring about the greatest improvement in the quality of life of people in poverty. That means when education is improved first, it will impact other dimensions, which in turn will have the greatest

improvement in the quality of life of people in poverty. Similarly, CONCERN (2023) asserts, “Education addresses many of the other issues that keep communities vulnerable.” According to the former President of South Africa, His Excellency Nelson Mandela, “Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world” (Sakmurzaeva, 2018).

- On *Ill Health*. An elderly woman in poverty said, “Diarrhea was a common disease in our villages till we started boiling drinking water.”: Improved education can have a positive impact on health outcomes by promoting health literacy, preventive measures, and access to healthcare services (TU, 2021; Awasthi, 2019);
- On *Income Poverty*. A young man in poverty said, “My earnings are very low because I do not have entrepreneurial knowledge about farming.”: Improved education can break the cycle of income poverty by providing individuals with the knowledge and skills needed for specific work and secure better-paying jobs (VCU, 2015; CONCERN, 2023);
- On *Poor Environment and Indecent Shelter*: People with more education tend to be more concerned about the environment, and this enables them to engage in actions that promote and support decisions that protect the environment (UNESCO, 2022; Magali & Anne, 2022);
- On *Solidarity of People Living in Poverty*. Improved education can foster a sense of community and solidarity, empowering individuals to collectively address poverty-related challenges (United Nations, 2014);
- On *Violence, Abuse, and Exploitation against Women and Children*. A woman practitioner said “These days, most women refuse to be treated like objects, beaten, abused, and exploited by men because they know their rights.”: Education can act as a protective factor by promoting gender equality, awareness of rights, and empowering individuals to combat violence and exploitation (CONCERN, 2023);
- On *Vulnerability to Harmful Social Behaviour*: Education can reduce vulnerability to harmful social behaviours by promoting critical thinking skills, informed decision-making, and healthy lifestyle choices (CONCERN, 2023);
- On *Tradition and Cultural Practices*: Education can challenge harmful traditional practices by promoting cultural sensitivity, gender equality, and human rights awareness (Vincent, 2021);
- On *Deficiencies in Implementation of Institution Policies*: Education can contribute to effective policy implementation by fostering informed citizenry and promoting accountability;
- On *the Constraint of Smallholder Agriculture Livelihood*. An elderly man in poverty said; “Due to lack of knowledge, all livestock left by my parents died leaving me in a destitute state.”: Improved education can enhance agricultural knowledge and skills, enabling smallholders to improve productivity, diversify income sources, and overcome livelihood constraints (Ninh, 2020);
- On *Discrimination and Social Exclusion*: Improved education plays a vital role in promoting inclusivity, challenging discriminatory attitudes, and fostering social cohesion;
- On *Absence of Protection, Parental, and Community Care*: Improved education can empower individuals with knowledge and skills to advocate for child protection, parental involvement, and community support systems (UNESCO, 2020); and
- On *Poverty-Related Psychological Effects*. An elderly woman living in poverty said, “Having a good education relieves a lot of mental stress and psychological pain.” Improved education provides opportunities for personal growth, self-esteem, and

mental well-being, mitigating the adverse psychological effects of poverty.

Impact of Improved Health on Other Dimensions

Ill health was ranked second as a dimension that should be tackled first to bring about the greatest improvement in the quality of life of people living in poverty. That means when health is improved first, it will impact other dimensions with the overall impact of improving the quality of life of people living in poverty. An academic said *“When you are sick you cannot do anything.”* A practitioner said, *“Good health is a capital/resource, just like having money.”*

- On *poor education*. An adult man living in poverty said *“Due to frequent sickness, my school attendance and overall performance became poor”*: Improved health can benefit education by curbing absenteeism, increasing concentration, and enhancing academic performance (TU, 2021; Awasthi, 2019);
- On *Income Poverty*. A young man living in poverty said, *“When our father who was a ‘breadwinner’ became sick for a long time, our family fell into poverty.”*: Improved health can reduce poverty by expanding employment opportunities and increasing productivity - both of which can increase income and reduce healthcare costs;
- On *Poor Environment and Indecent Shelter*. A young woman living in poverty said, *“We often suffer from diarrhea because a dirty environment surrounds us.”*: Improved health can be enhanced by living in better environmental conditions, reducing the risk of infectious diseases and chronic illnesses;
- On *Solidarity of People Living in Poverty*: Improved health can reduce social isolation and lessen poverty-related challenges, such as access to healthcare and employment opportunities;

- On *Violence, Abuse, and Exploitation against Women and Children*. A woman in poverty said, *“Due to frequent violence and abuse at home, children are forced to live in an unhealthy environment in the street.”*; Better health can decrease vulnerability to violence, abuse, and exploitation, particularly among women and children;
- On *Vulnerability to Harmful Social Behaviour*: Poor health can increase vulnerability to harmful social behaviours, such as substance abuse and risky sexual behaviour;
- On *Tradition and Cultural Practices*. A man in poverty said *“When our sister got malaria for a long period, we believed she had been witched so, we sent her to the witch doctor but her health deteriorated until she died.”*: Improved health can discourage harmful cultural practices, such as witchcraft and child marriage, which can have adverse health consequences;
- On *Deficiencies in Implementation of Institution Policies*: Better health can contribute to effective policy implementation by enhancing access to healthcare and productivity;
- On *the Constraint of Smallholder Agriculture Livelihood*. An elderly woman in poverty said, *“When I became sick for a long time my health deteriorated, and could not work hard anymore so, food production declined.”*: Improved health can enhance agricultural productivity, increase income, and reduce poverty-related challenges;
- On *Discrimination and Social Exclusion*: Better health can reduce social exclusion, enhancing access to education, employment, and healthcare services;
- On *Absence of Protection, Parental and Community Care*: Better health can reduce vulnerability to neglect and abuse, particularly among children and vulnerable populations; and

- On *Poverty-Related Psychological Effects*. An adult man in poverty said, “*Frequent sickness mainly for the breadwinner, or sickness which takes a long period can exacerbate mental stress.*”: Better health can reduce the psychological effects of poverty, such as depression and anxiety.

Impact of Deficiencies in the Implementation of Institutional Policies on Other Dimensions

Deficiencies in implementing institutional policies were ranked second as a dimension that should be tackled first to bring about the greatest improvement in the quality of life of people living in poverty. That means when the implementation of policies is improved first, it will impact other dimensions, improving the quality of life of people living in poverty. An academic said, “*Corruption, embezzlement, and mismanagement of public resources are our worst enemies and the main causes of poverty today.*”

- On *Poor Quality Education*. A teacher said “*I have lost morale to work hard because I have not been promoted for years*”: Improved policy implementation can improve work morale, result in resources availability, qualified teachers, and an effective curriculum, resulting in good quality education;
 - On *Ill Health*. An old woman living in poverty said “*Though I deserve free health services I do not get it, so my health deteriorates day by day*”: Improved policy implementation can allow access to healthcare services, preventive measures, and health education, resulting in better health outcomes;
 - On *Income Poverty*. A young man living in poverty said “*The whole system of income generation is very exploitative*”: An adult man living in poverty said, “*Leaders in the villages have created many taxes which reduce our income from crop sales.*” Improved policy implementation can reduce income poverty by increasing
- employment opportunities, economic development, and social protection measures;
 - On *Poor Environment and Indecent Shelter*. An academic said “*There are risky places that are prohibited by laws to establish a home, but still people construct houses and live without any action taken against them*”, Improved policy implementation can reduce environmental degradation, access to basic amenities, and adequate housing conditions, reducing poor health outcomes and poverty-related challenges;
 - On *Solidarity of People Living in Poverty*: Improved policy implementation can improve social support systems, promote community development, and enhance the solidarity of people living in poverty;
 - On *Violence, Abuse, and Exploitation against Women and Children*: Improved policy implementation can enhance protection measures, increase access to justice, and reduce vulnerability to violence, abuse, and exploitation;
 - On *Vulnerability to Harmful Social Behavior*. An academic said “*Corruption is everywhere but there is no stern action taken against the culprits*”: Improved policy implementation can address the root causes of harmful social behavior, reduce vulnerability, and improve prevention efforts;
 - On *Tradition and Cultural Practices*. An elderly woman said, “*Although people with albinism are protected, they are still being killed.*”: Improved policy implementation can prevent harmful traditional practices by providing adequate legal frameworks or awareness programs to address them effectively;
 - On *the Constraint of Smallholder Agriculture Livelihood*. An adult farmer living in poverty said, “*Conflict between farmers and pastoralists has caused much harm to farmers. The pastoralists believe*

their cows are more important than our crops, so allow them to eat our crops.”: Improved policy implementation can resolve conflicts, improve access to agricultural resources and market opportunities, lessening the constraints faced by smallholder farmers;

- *On Discrimination and Social Exclusion:* Improved policy implementation can reduce discriminatory practices, provide equal opportunities, and reduce social exclusion of certain groups within society;
- *On Absence of Protection, Parental, and Community Care:* Better policy implementation can provide support systems, improve access to protection services, and community care, reduce individuals' and family's vulnerability; and
- *On Poverty-Related Psychological Effects.* A young man in poverty said, *“If policies in place will be properly implemented, it will relieve a lot of mental stress and psychological pain.”: Improved policy implementation can reduce the psychological effects of poverty by providing adequate mental health services or social support programs.*

The Impact of Vulnerability to Harmful Social Behavior on Other Dimensions

Vulnerability to harmful social behavior was ranked third as a dimension that should be tackled first to bring about the greatest improvement in the quality of life of people living in poverty. That means when vulnerability to harmful social behavior is improved first, it will have an impact on other dimensions, which will, in turn, improve the quality of life of people living in poverty. An elderly woman living in poverty said, *“People in poverty addicted to excessive drinking of alcohol, drug abuse, gambling, and unnecessary celebrations put them at risk of falling into extreme poverty because those acts use the little money they have.”* Another widow lady living in poverty said, *“I sold my piece of*

land to finance the celebration of my daughter after she turned twelve years old. Since then, I have not been able to produce enough food for the family.”

- *On Poor Quality Education.* A young man in poverty said, *“Since I started gambling, my school performance has become very poor.”: Reducing vulnerability to harmful social behavior can reduce absenteeism in school, improve concentration, improve academic performance, and enhance the quality of education;*
- *On Ill Health.* A practitioner said, *“Drug abuse has affected the health of many working-age people.”: Reducing vulnerability to harmful social behavior can enhance health outcomes, such as drug abuse and sexual behavior, reducing vulnerability to ill health;*
- *On Income Poverty.* A woman in poverty said, *“If you sell your land to finance traditional celebrations, you are digging your own grave of poverty.”: Reducing vulnerability to harmful social behavior can reduce income poverty by increasing employment opportunities and productivity;*
- *On Poor Environment and Indecent Shelter:* Reducing vulnerability to harmful social behavior can enhance environmental conditions, reducing the risk of infectious diseases and chronic illnesses;
- *On Solidarity of People Living in Poverty:* Reducing vulnerability to harmful social behavior can enhance community development and social support systems, improving the solidarity of people living in poverty;
- *On Violence, Abuse, and Exploitation against Women and Children.* A young woman living in poverty said, *“My husband severely beat me because I was against his advice to drop my daughter out of school to get married.”: Reducing vulnerability to harmful social behavior can reduce the risk of violence, abuse, and*

exploitation, particularly among women and children;

- *On Tradition and Culture Practices:* Reducing vulnerability to harmful social behavior can reduce vulnerability to harmful traditional practices, particularly among marginalized groups;
- *On Deficiencies in Implementation of Institution Policies:* Reducing vulnerability to harmful social behavior can contribute to effective policy implementation by reducing social problems and hindering prevention efforts;
- *On the Constraint of Smallholder's Agriculture Livelihood:* Reducing vulnerability to harmful social behavior can promote agricultural productivity, increase income, and improve poverty-related challenges faced by smallholder farmers;
- *On Discrimination and Social Exclusion:* Reducing vulnerability to harmful social behavior can reduce discrimination and social exclusion, further marginalizing certain groups within society;
- *On Absence of Protection, Parental, and Community Care:* Reducing vulnerability to harmful social behavior can reduce the risk of neglect and abuse, particularly among children and vulnerable populations; and
- *On Poverty-Related Psychological Effects.* An elderly man in poverty said, “*People involved in excessive drinking of alcohol, drug abuse, gambling, and unnecessary celebrations, fail to support their families and, therefore, exacerbate mental stress and psychological pain.*”: Reducing vulnerability to harmful social behavior can lessen the psychological effects of poverty, such as depression and anxiety.

The Impact of Improved Income on Other Dimensions

Income poverty was ranked fourth as a dimension that should be tackled first to bring about the greatest improvement in the quality of

life of people living in poverty. That means when income is improved first, it will have a significant impact on other dimensions, which will, in turn, improve the quality of life of people living in poverty. A young man living in poverty said, “*People with low levels of income live a tough life.*” Another lady living in poverty said, “*Having money can relieve much mental stress because you can get whatever you want easily.*” A young man living in poverty said, “*The fact that we do not have money does not mean that we are not knowledgeable.*”

- *On Poor Quality Education.* An adult man in poverty said, “*I did not perform well in school because my parents had no money to pay extra tuition fees and buy learning materials.*”: Improved income enables access to better schools, educational materials, tutors, and extracurricular activities, which can enhance academic outcomes (Pearson, 2018);
- *On Ill Health.* An adult man in poverty said, “*Due to lack of money, I constructed a house on a dirty, unsafe, and flood-prone setting putting our health in danger.*”: Higher-income people have better access to clean and safer living conditions (Zhang & Xiang, 2019);
- *On Poor Environment and Indecent Shelter.* A young lady in poverty said, “*We live in a house constructed by poles and mud whose wall is about to fall. The wall asks, ‘Should I kill you today or tomorrow?’ We reply, ‘Please wait a bit; we are still looking for support.’*” Better income allows access to basic amenities, such as clean water, sanitation, and good housing conditions, resulting in better environmental conditions and fewer infectious diseases;
- *On Solidarity of People Living in Poverty:* Better income can reduce social isolation and promote community development, increasing social support systems and solidarity among people living in poverty;

- On *Violence, Abuse, and Exploitation against Women and Children*. An elderly woman living in poverty said, “*Women are often abused, exploited, and expelled from home by our husbands simply because they do not have income.*”: Better income for disadvantaged groups can reduce vulnerability to violence, abuse, and exploitation, particularly among women and children who may refuse to be engaged in exploitative work or activities to survive;
- On *Vulnerability to Harmful Social Behavior*: Improved income can reduce vulnerability to harmful social behavior, such as substance abuse and sexual behavior, due to increased access to resources and opportunities;
- On *Tradition and Culture Practices*. A young lady in poverty said, “*I was forced into early marriage because my father needed money*”: Improved income can reduce harmful traditional practices, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation, which can have adverse health consequences;
- On *Deficiencies in the Implementation of institutional policies*. An elderly man living in poverty said, “*Sometimes we are forced to bribe to get our rights.*” Improved income can contribute to effective policy implementation by permitting access to resources and opportunities needed for effective policy implementation;
- On *the Constraint of Smallholder Agriculture Livelihood*. A young man living in poverty said “*Our production is poor because we don’t have money to pay for seed and fertilizer*”: Improved income can allow access to agricultural resources, financial support, and market opportunities, reducing smallholder farmers’ constraints;
- On *Discrimination and Social Exclusion*: Better income can reduce discriminatory practices, create equal opportunities, and

reduce social exclusion, further engaging all groups within society;

- On *Absence of Protection, Parental, and Community Care*: Improved income can reduce vulnerability to neglect and abuse, particularly among children and vulnerable populations who may not receive adequate protection, parental care, or community support; and
- On *Poverty-Related Psychological Effects*. A young woman in poverty said, “*Having a good income can relieve many psychological stresses because money enables you to get whatever you want.*” Income can lessen the psychological effects of poverty by reducing stress, anxiety, and depression due to improved resources and opportunities.

The Impact of Improved Traditional and Cultural Practices on Other Dimensions

Tradition and cultural practices were ranked fourth as a dimension that should be tackled first to bring about the greatest improvement in the quality of life of people living in poverty. That means when traditional and cultural practices are improved first, it will have a significant impact on other dimensions, which will, in turn, improve the quality of life of people in poverty. An adult woman living in poverty said, “*Many people in poverty who engage in superstitious beliefs fall into extreme poverty.*” Another young woman living in poverty said, “*Killing people with albinism believing that they will become rich has caused a lot of suffering and psychological pain.*”

- On *Poor Quality Education*. A young woman living in poverty said, “*Most girls are not allowed to go to school because when they get married they will not be beneficial to the family*”: Improved traditional and cultural practices can reduce gender-based discrimination, and promote access to education for girls and women, resulting in improved quality education;

- On *Ill Health*. An elderly woman living in poverty said “*When I got sick for a long time, my husband took me to the witch doctor, but my health deteriorated. When they took me to the hospital, I was diagnosed with malaria*”: Improved traditional and cultural practices can reduce harmful practices, such as witchcraft, female genital mutilation, and child marriage, which can have adverse health consequences;
- On *Income Poverty*. An elderly man in poverty said, “*Most people spend much money on witchcraft.*”: Improved traditional and cultural practices can enhance access to economic resources and opportunities, reducing income poverty;
- On *Poor Environment and Indecent Shelter*: Improved traditional and cultural practices can improve environmental degradation, such as deforestation, resulting in improved environmental conditions and decent shelter;
- On *Solidarity of People Living in Poverty*: Improved traditional and cultural practices can improve social mobility and reduce social exclusion, enhancing the solidarity of people living in poverty;
- On *Violence, Abuse, and Exploitation against Women and Children*. An elderly woman said, “*The existing social system in which men hold primary power and play a dominant role in political leadership, economic control, and decision-making is one of the main causes of women's violence, abuse, and exploitation.*”: Improved traditional and cultural practices can reduce gender-based violence, abuse, and exploitation against women and children;
- On *Vulnerability to Harmful Social Behavior*: Improved tradition and cultural practices can reduce harmful social behavior, such as substance abuse and sexual behavior, due to increased access to resources and opportunities;
- On *Deficiencies in Implementation of Institution Policies*. An academic said, “*Sometimes the government fails to enforce policies on issues related to witchcraft because it does not believe that witchcraft exists.*”: Improved traditional and cultural practices can enhance effective policy implementation by dealing with issues hindering prevention efforts;
- On *the constraint of smallholders' agricultural livelihood, a young fish farmer in poverty* “*accused a neighbor fish farmer of transferring fish from his pond to the neighbor's pond through witchcraft power. However, a thorough follow-up revealed that an otter ate the fish.*” Improved traditional and cultural practices can increase knowledge, access to agricultural resources, financial support, and market opportunities, reducing the constraints faced by smallholder farmers;
- On *Discrimination and Social Exclusion*. An elderly woman living in poverty said, “*Due to witchcraft belief, Old women with red eyes are discriminated against by the community.*” Improved traditional and cultural practices can reduce discrimination and social exclusion, further engaging certain groups within society;
- On *Absence of Protection, Parental and Community Care*: Improved traditional and cultural practices can reduce vulnerability to neglect and abuse, particularly among children and vulnerable populations who may not receive adequate protection, parental care, or community support; and
- On *Poverty-Related Psychological Effects*. An elderly woman in poverty said, “*Killings of some people with albinism, old women with red eyes, and children have been associated with witchcraft beliefs. Such killings have led to pain for relatives, friends, and other people.*”: Improved traditional and cultural practices can reduce the psychological effects of poverty

by minimizing stress, anxiety, and depression.

The Impact of Improved Smallholder Agriculture Livelihood on Other Dimensions

The constraint of smallholder agriculture livelihood was ranked fifth as a dimension that should be tackled first to bring about the greatest improvement in the quality of life of people living in poverty. That means when smallholder agriculture is improved first, it will have a significant impact on other dimensions, which will, in turn, improve the quality of life of people in poverty. An adult man living in poverty said, *“If we get proper training and inputs on time, we can improve our farming practices and reduce poverty considerably.”* A young man living in poverty, said, *“Businesspersons manipulate measurement scales to take advantage of poor farmers.”*

- On *Poor Quality Education*. A young man living in poverty said, *“Due to lack of food, sometimes I go to school without eating. This has, to a greater extent, affected my education performance.”* Improved smallholder agricultural livelihood can enhance attendance, concentration, and morale to study, leading to better academic performance;
- On *Ill Health*. An elderly woman in poverty said, *“Agriculture is the main supplier of our food; when it does well our health is improved.”* Improved smallholder agricultural livelihood can permit access to many cheap and varied food options, resulting in improved health outcomes and reduced vulnerability to illnesses.
- On *Income poverty*. A young man living in poverty said, *“Agriculture is the main source of food and income so when it thrives, our income is also improved.”* Improved smallholder agriculture livelihood can increase income poverty by enhancing employment opportunities and productivity;

- On *Poor Environment and Indecent Shelter*: Improved smallholder agricultural livelihood can improve environmental conditions, reducing the risk of infectious diseases and chronic illnesses;
- On *Solidarity of People Living in Poverty*: Improved smallholder agriculture livelihood can enhance community development and social support systems, strengthening the solidarity of people living in poverty;
- On *Violence, Abuse, and Exploitation against Women and Children*: Improved smallholder agriculture livelihood can increase the production of food and income and therefore, reduce vulnerability to violence, abuse, and exploitation, particularly among women and children who may refuse to engage in exploitative work or activities to survive;
- On *Vulnerability to Harmful Social Behavior*. A young man living in poverty said *“When the contribution of agriculture, the main supplier of food and income, is low, people start involved in harmful behavior.”*: Improved smallholder's agriculture livelihood can increase food production and income and therefore reduce vulnerability to harmful social behavior, such as gambling, corruption, and sexual behavior as ways of earning income;
- On *Tradition and Cultural Practices*: Improved smallholder agriculture livelihood can lessen harmful traditional practices, such as child labor and forced marriage;
- On *Deficiencies in Implementation of Institution Policies*: Improved smallholder agriculture livelihood can contribute to effective policy implementation by reducing social problems and enhancing prevention efforts;
- On *Discrimination and Social Exclusion*, Improved smallholder's agricultural livelihood can reduce discriminatory

practices, enhance opportunities, and reduce social exclusion, further taking on board certain groups within society;

- On *Absence of Protection, Parental, and Community Care*: Improved smallholder agriculture livelihood can reduce vulnerability to neglect and abuse, particularly among children and vulnerable populations who may not receive adequate protection, parental care, or community support; and
- On *Poverty-Related Psychological Effects*. An elderly woman said, “*When agriculture does not thrive, it increases mental stress*”: Improved smallholder agriculture livelihood can lessen the psychological effects of poverty by reducing stress, anxiety, and depression due to increased resources and opportunities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, people living in poverty participated on an equal footing with academics and practitioners to rank the dimensions of poverty according to their importance, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. A "pair-wise comparison" tool was used to rank the dimensions of poverty that should be tackled first to bring the greatest improvement in the quality of life of people in poverty. The study found that Poor Quality Education was the most important dimension to address first, followed by Ill Health, and deficiencies in implementing institutional Policies, Vulnerability to Harmful Social Behavior, Income Poverty, and tradition and Cultural Practices. Smallholder Agriculture Livelihood was ranked fifth. The study recommends tackling the dimensions of poverty with the greatest potential to improve the quality of life of people living in poverty first, as the government and development partners may not have the resources to address all dimensions simultaneously.

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