



# Urban social policy and poverty reduction

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**SUMMARY:** *The paper describes the differences in the ways that social and economic policy perceive poverty and its underlying causes, and thus differences in how they define it, measure it and institute mechanisms to reduce it. It also highlights the many dimensions of poverty that economic policy ignores and considers the constraints that limit the effectiveness of current poverty reduction strategies.*

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1. This paper was first published as Working Paper No. 10 by the Urban Development Division of the World Bank. It relates to ongoing work by the Urban Development Division of the World Bank. This includes a research project on "Urban

## I. INTRODUCTION

**AS GOVERNMENTS, DONOR** agencies and NGOs redefine their poverty reduction policies in Third World cities in the 1990s, they are recognizing the need to simultaneously integrate a number of complex economic, social and environmental concerns – frequently in juxtaposition or competition with each other. Such organizations acknowledge the severe limitations of current paradigms to provide a comprehensive framework for interventions that include multiple policy objectives. In the search for new, or more appropriate, policy models for environmentally sustainable development, urban social policy can make an important contribution to ensure effective poverty reduction.

The purpose of this paper is to examine urban social policy and poverty reduction in terms of a number of substantive and operationally related issues of particular relevance in the current changing political and economic climate. It provides a working definition of social policy and identifies some of the most significant differences in the welfare objectives of economic policy, social sector policy and social policy. It highlights the methodology for the measurement of poverty that underpins social policy and raises a number of complex questions that social policy poses both for institutional structures and for operational procedures in urban planning practice. It is important to emphasize that this is a brief and preliminary working document to stimulate further debate among development practitioners – rather than a conclusive analysis – and represents ongoing work currently being undertaken by the Urban Development Division of the World Bank.<sup>(1)</sup>

Poverty and Social Policy in the Context of Adjustment" as well as issues presented at a workshop on "Urban Poverty and Social Policy: Operational Issues for Donors". The workshop, organized by the World Bank, was held in Paris, France on the 18-19th November 1992. An earlier draft of this paper, sent for comments to participants attending the Paris workshop, resulted in a large number of critically important contributions. Many of these have been integrated in the redrafting. I would like to acknowledge gratefully the following for their assistance: Jo Beal, Robert Curvin, Rosalind Eyben, Kristina Bohman, Sylvie Lacroux, Walter Meyer, Andrew Norton, R. Padmini, Alfredo Stein, Howard Sumka and Judy White.

2. World Bank (1991), *Urban Policy and Economic Development, An Agenda for the 1990s*, Washington DC; United Nations Development Programme (1991), *Cities, People and Poverty*, UNDP, New York; United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (1988), *Global Shelter Strategy to the Year 2000*, UNCHS, Nairobi; Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *A World of Difference*, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague; Swedish International Development Authority (1991), *Poverty, Environment and Development*, SIDA, Stockholm; and Stren, R. and P. McCarney (1992), *Urban Research in the Developing World: Towards an Agenda for the 1990s*, University of Toronto, Centre for Urban and Community Studies, Toronto.

3. There are, obviously, some notable exceptions to this highly generalized definition of the "urban" as a spatial concern focusing on the provision of physical infrastructure. Smaller scale, community based programming has provided the entry point for cross-sectoral interventions. The best-known example is UNICEF's Urban Basic Services Programme with

## II. CONSTRAINTS IN CURRENT URBAN POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGIES

**IN THE PAST** five years donors, Third World governments and NGOs have once again turned their attention to the role of Third World cities in development processes and the identification of more appropriate policies for urban poverty reduction within the context of environmentally sustainable development. Recent documents highlighting urban policy include the World Bank's *Urban Policy and Economic Development, An Agenda for the 1990s* (1991), the United Nations Development Programme's *Cities, People and Poverty* (1991), and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlement's *Global Shelter Strategy to the Year 2000* (1988). Poverty focused policy documents include the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *A World of Difference*, the Swedish International Development Authority's *Poverty, Environment and Development* (1991) as well as documentation from the UNDP/UNCHS/World Bank Urban Management Programme and the Ford Foundation Global Research Project "Towards A Research Agenda for the 1990s".<sup>(2)</sup> Finally, specific environmentally focused policy documents include the World Bank's World Development Report, *The Challenge of Development* (1991).

Such documents illustrate significant changes in approach to both urban development and urban poverty reduction. Nevertheless the definition of the "urban" as a focus of expertise and intervention, by most government planners and donors alike, remains a **spatial** concern with the "physical infrastructure" problems of housing, sanitation, water, land use and transportation. The household is the predominant unit of targeting. Traditionally, it has also reflected institutional and management concerns with local government, and operational procedures based on rational comprehensive procedural planning at programme and project level. Generally, it has not included "economic" and "social infrastructure" issues such as employment, health, education and community services. It has not integrated other institutional structures such as NGOs, or included participatory planning procedures.<sup>(3)</sup>

The World Bank, for instance, currently has three predominant but separate **operational** strategies for urban poverty alleviation or reduction. These fall within the three-tier strategy proposed by the 1990 World Development Report.<sup>(4)</sup>

- The infrastructure sector is expanding rapidly, its projects in those sectors traditionally defined as "urban" by government planners and donors. These are the "physical infrastructure" concerns of housing, sanitation, water, land use and transportation.
- Similarly the social sector is expanding its focus on urban social services, the "social infrastructure" relating to primary health, education and nutrition.
- Recently, safety nets and compensatory measures have been introduced as a solution to protect the poor from temporary setbacks in countries experiencing macro-economic reform and adjustment measures. These have been targeted at spe-

a variety of other agencies following their lead in this field.

4. World Bank (1990), *World Development Report 1990*, Washington DC.

5. World Bank (1991), *Assistance Strategies to Reduce Poverty*, World Bank, Washington DC.

6. World Bank (1991), *Urban Policy and Economic Development, An Agenda for the 1990s*, World Bank, Washington DC.

cific groups of the poor affected by such problems as declines in real wages, increases in basic food prices, and cutbacks on social sector spending in education and health care. The urban components include food and nutrition assistance, employment and income generation, and social and economic infrastructure interventions.

The **institutional** framework for all three interventions remain mainly with government. In the case of infrastructure it is **local** government that is prioritized in terms of capacity building and investments; in the case of social services the focus is at the level of both **national** and **local** government; safety nets and compensatory measures have used **government agencies**, as well as **private sector institutions** and **NGOs**.

Despite increased resource allocations to urban development, there is no guarantee that individual sectoral interventions will have a significant impact on urban poverty reduction. There are a number of important constraints from both the supplier and beneficiary perspective. Where interventions are sector specific, they can only be partial in nature and, therefore, are not necessarily the most efficient use of resources. Lack of a cross-sectoral planning methodology tends to result in a "christmas tree" approach with arbitrary interventions in different unconnected sectors. Institutional and management concerns with government delivery of services can result in a failure to examine the community basis and social relevance of the interventions.

From a beneficiary perspective, individual and household level strategies have contextually and culturally specific trade-offs in different sectors, relating to such factors as stages in individual and household life cycle, the relationship between needs of different household members (men and women, boys and girls), and between productive and reproductive work. In a supply driven approach this is not necessarily apparent. However, in a demand driven one, which assumes such notions as "willingness to pay", inter-sectoral policy linkages are critical. The basic reason is obvious; while planning agencies plan at the sectoral level, households and individuals plan cross-sectorally.

### III. TOWARDS A NEW PARADIGM OF URBAN SOCIAL POLICY

**FOR AGENCIES CONSTRAINED** by existing sectoral procedures, the development of a cross-sectoral approach is highly relevant. In the World Bank, a number of recent initiatives create the potential opportunity to integrate poverty cross-sectorally. For instance, the World Bank's *Assistance Strategies to Reduce Poverty* introduced a dualist methodology, based on a two-part strategy which is both **economic** and **social** in nature.<sup>(5)</sup>

In this context, the Urban Policy Paper recognized that "watering and housing" the poor has not solved the problem of urban poverty.<sup>(6)</sup> To alleviate urban poverty requires managing both **economic** as well as **social** aspects of poverty. The objective of urban programmes and projects must be to enter the city not

just through “the house and bathroom” but through inter-relationships between poverty, productivity and environment. This approach recognizes the holistic inter-relationship between economically, environmentally and socially sustainable urban development. This includes interventions in basic services in education, health, nutrition and family planning as well as increasing access to infrastructure and housing. It requires the integration of institutional structure other than local government, as well as the development of more participatory planning procedures.

#### IV. WHAT IS SOCIAL POLICY?

**IF THE REDUCTION** of urban poverty is the agreed objective, can this be achieved by socially sensitive economic interventions? Does urban social policy and planning provide an alternative framework? The last decade has seen both the projectization of assistance, targeted in a highly sectoral manner, as well as increases in programme lending to financial institutions concerned with the “management” of cities. Are these the most efficient and effective ways of dealing with poverty reduction? Is a broader institutional framework, and one that includes a social perspective, required? To answer this question it is necessary to clarify what is meant by social policy, and the way it addresses such issues.

##### a. The Distinction between Sectoral and Holistic Definitions

Historically, definitions of social policy have varied, depending on whether defined in **sectoral** or **holistic** terms. The **sectoral** approach is based on the premise that particular aspects of human activity can be isolated for separate treatment, differentiating spheres such as education, health, housing or personal social services for individual professional application. Social policy and planning is then equated with social sector policy, with planning focusing on those sectors defined as “social”. With its objective the promotion of human welfare, or human resource development, this has traditionally meant the welfarist provision of individual, family and community welfare services ranging from health to education to social security.

The **holistic** or “unified” approach to social policy addresses wider issues within which sectoral concerns are rooted. This approach originally emerged in the UN in the late 1960s and 1970s as a reaction against the excessively narrow emphasis both on economic goals in economic policy, and on social services in social policy, and the consequent neglect of broader social development goals in themselves.<sup>(7)</sup> **Its primary concern is the attainment of social objectives compatible with the ideal of the just, equal and prosperous society. These include the equitable distribution of wealth, increased participation and national integration, as well as steady increases in levels of living and welfare.**<sup>(8)</sup>

During the past five decades, important changes have occurred

7. United Nations (1971), *1970 Report on the World Social Situation*, United Nations, New York.

8. Hardiman, M. and J. Midgley (1982), *The Social Dimensions of Development: Social Policy and Planning in the Third World*, John Wiley, Chichester, page 20.

9. For an analysis of the changing agenda of social policy in Third World countries between 1960-1990, see Moser, C.O.N. (1992), "From residual welfare to compensatory measures: the changing agenda of social policy in developing countries" *Silver Jubilee Paper* No.6, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex.

10. One of the earliest and best-known such safety nets was the Bolivian Emergency Social Fund. See, for instance, Jorgensen, S., M. Grosh and M. Schacter (editors) (1992), *Bolivia's Answer to Poverty, Economic Crisis and Adjustment*, World Bank Regional and Sectoral Studies, Washington DC.

in the models of social policy mirroring general changes in macro-level economic approaches to Third World development. These can be categorized along a continuum with **residual welfare** (pure market distribution) and **structural** (pure need based distribution) models at the end points, with **incremental** and **basic needs** representing different mixes between the two. Models of social policy differ in terms of the role of the state, the institutional structure, the scope of statutory provision, the sectors of intervention and the extent to which the policy is supply or demand driven.<sup>(9)</sup>

It is important to recognize that governments and donors alike do not select models of social policy arbitrarily or in a vacuum – they are tied to the characteristics of the institutions promoting them. The fact that countries with the same level of GNP can have different social policies indicates the importance that political and social values play in the choices governments make. For instance, in Eastern Europe, the removal of a standardized structural model of social policy is resulting in very different social policies in different countries.

In the last few years in countries experiencing economic reform and adjustment measures, some of the most important social interventions by multilateral and bilateral donors have been safety nets and compensatory measures such as social emergency and social investment funds. Initially, these were introduced as small-scale, short-term, direct welfarist measures.<sup>(10)</sup> Today, however, the purpose of social investment funds is defined more broadly. They are viewed as non-conventional, complementary, demand driven mechanisms for meeting local needs for social infrastructure and basic services, and extended to include a variety of fund-like programmes in countries experiencing adjustment and economic reform in Latin America, Asia and Africa. Although these have not been designed within a comprehensive social policy framework, in many contexts it is often assumed that they can address the problems of structural as well as transitional poverty. As such, they provide an important entry point for the formulation of social policy.

## b. Social Policy and Welfare

The importance of social policy, defined holistically, lies in its particular focus on social rather than economic interventions as complementary determinants of development. It places less emphasis on **economic** and infrastructure factors – such as investment in technologically advanced industrial and agricultural production – and more on both the **social** structure of society and **political** context in which decisions are made, as determinants of development.

In the same way that economic policy promotes economic development objectives – the development of the economy – social policy promotes social development objectives – the development of an equitable society in terms not only of income but also gender, ethnicity and race. To achieve this objective social policy prioritizes poverty reduction, increased employment and societal cohesion.

Social and economic policy provide different but complementary perspectives as to how institutions, including markets, func-

11. Noel, M. (1992), *Social Policy for Poverty Reduction in Africa*, World Bank, Washington DC.

12. See reference 11, page 5.

13. See reference 4, page 27.

tion. While economic policy is concerned with the efficient allocation of economic resources for increasing productivity, social policy is concerned with the manner in which both the structure of society, and its institutions (both formal and informal), determine the participation of different social groups in the development process.

Economic policy generally considers individuals, including the poor, as "atomistic decision makers in product and labour markets, not as members of social groups."<sup>(11)</sup> In focusing on "competitive" individuals or households outside of specific social reality, it is not concerned with the nature of society and relies on a utilitarian definition of social welfare. The basic measure of welfare is income and consumption, supplemented by measures of access to basic needs such as health, education and shelter. "Poverty is seen as a lack of command over certain goods and services, not in a broader sense as a deprivation of basic human rights."<sup>(12)</sup>

Social policy, in integrating non-utilitarian dimensions of welfare and the collective behaviour of socio-economic groups, shows that social relationships and society cannot simply be factored into an equation. It also assumes that the concept of welfare, or well-being, is normative in that policy makers, as social actors, make judgements and plan expenditure on the basis of how they perceive the world. As the 1990 World Development report states "...the criteria for distinguishing the poor from the non-poor tend to reflect specific national priorities and normative concepts of welfare and rights."<sup>(13)</sup>

Different societies, and different groups and institutions within society, do not necessarily share a universal model for achieving human welfare, with prescriptions for change both historically and culturally specific. Social policy, therefore, recognizes the severe conflict of interests between major social groups, political organizations and popular movements, all closely concerned with the distribution of costs and benefits which might arise from planned intervention.

Just as economic policy analysis assesses how government policy affects the economy, so social policy analysis focuses on the way in which government action affects the welfare or well-being of its citizens. It recognizes that governments vary in the extent to which they are capable of identifying, or interested in understanding, the impact of their interventions on peoples' well-being. More often than not they base their prescriptions on "common sense" or the interests of certain classes or groups in society that they represent.

This can have important implications for donors in terms of the way that they make choices about their interventions. For instance, if governments are seen not to represent the views of the majority of its citizens, donors may wish to by-pass them and transfer resources directly to civil society. In some contexts, however, institutional statutes prohibiting action in overtly political spheres may constrain such alternative interventions. In other contexts there may equally be important reasons to ensure that the state does not abnegate or reject its responsibility for the welfare needs of all members of society.

The welfare objectives of social policy include not only basic

14. The United Nations defines human development as the process of enlarging people's choices - not only increasing their opportunities for education, health care, income and employment but covering the full range of human choices from a sound physical environment to economic and political freedom (see reference 7). In a recent attempt to measure human development the UNDP has developed a human development index, ranking countries in terms of a number of personal, legal and political rights; see United Nations Development Programme (1991), *Human Development Report*, Oxford University Press, New York.

15. Serageldin, Ismail (1989) "Poverty, adjustment and growth in Africa", World Bank, Washington, DC, page 23.

needs - defined from a universal concept of welfare relating to physical survival - but also non-economic objectives of basic human rights in development.<sup>(14)</sup> Social policy recognizes that an inequitable society is an inefficient society, since many people are excluded from achieving their full human potential - with exclusion criteria culturally determined on the basis of income, gender, ethnicity and race.

Consequently, social policy is concerned not only with absolute standards of living of society - i.e. absolute poverty - and the instruments, incentives and regulatory framework to effect better distribution but also with relative standards of living across the whole society - i.e. relative poverty - and the more equitable distribution of wealth. These are what may be termed equity variables.

### c. Social Policy and the Measurement of Poverty

How is poverty defined, measured and understood? Can measurements of poverty levels and total disbursement figures provide the necessary information about what it *means* to be poor, how people themselves subjectively perceive their poverty, and what they do about it? Economic policy, social sector policy and social policy have different definitions of development and different objectives in achieving this. Consequently, they also differ in how they define poverty, in the indicators they use to measure it, as well as in the mechanisms for the implementation of poverty reduction strategies.

Differences in the definition between absolute and relative poverty provide a useful starting point. As Serageldin has articulated:

"Poverty has been defined in two ways. Absolute poverty is the inability to secure the minimum basic needs for human survival according to standards so low that they challenge the adequate comprehension of most members of industrial society, a condition that Robert MacNamara rightly labeled as beneath any concept of human dignity. The second notion of poverty is relative poverty. Various identified as the lower 30 or 40 per cent of the income distribution, the relatively poor may have barely secured the minimum basic needs but have such limited resources that they lack the means of adequate social participation. They are effectively marginalized from mainstream society, even though they may constitute a majority of the population."<sup>(15)</sup>

Individual social indicators of welfare relating to infant mortality, life expectancy, nutrition and health are used by social sector specialists to promote human resource development. World Bank research on the social dimensions of adjustment, for instance, used measurements based on economic and social indicators of individual well-being, such as per capita income, under five mortality or net primary enrolment, to show that the poor are not a homogeneous group. Using economic classifications they distinguished on the basis of consumption and income data between the "new" poor, direct victims of ad-

16. See: World Bank (1990), *World Development Report 1990*, Washington DC; World Bank (1988), *Targeted Programs for the Poor During Structural Adjustment*, Washington DC; also World Bank (1987), *Protecting the Poor During Periods of Adjustment*, Washington DC.

17. Norton, A. (1993), "Social development, social policy and multi/bi-lateral aid organizations: some notes on the institutional context" (mimeo).

18. Chambers, R. (1989), "Editorial introduction: vulnerability, coping and policy", *Bulletin of the Institute of Development Studies* Vol.20, No.2, page 1.

19. Beck, T. (1989), "Survival strategies and power amongst the poorest in a West Bengal village", *Bulletin of the Institute of Development Studies* Vol.20, No.2, page 23.

20. See reference 18.

21. Entitlement of poverty relating to how issues of well-being and livelihood security are experienced by the poor themselves frequently require qualitative participatory methodologies. See Norton, A. (1992), "Directions for qualitative research on local conceptions of poverty and vulnerability" (mimeo).

justment, the "borderline" poor, on the brink of poverty, who are "pushed over the line" by austerity measures, and the "chronic" or "structural" poor, extremely poor even before adjustment began.<sup>(16)</sup>

In its measurement of poverty, social policy differs from economic policy in two fundamental ways. First, it recognizes that the social and political structure in which people live, as well as the physical and economic environment, determines well-being. It acknowledges the importance of the organizational and institutional context within which individuals exist, rather than seeing them just as "free-floating" in the market.<sup>(17)</sup> Second, it recognizes the importance of the poor's own perception of poverty and their context specific identification of priorities. Chambers has commented that the concepts of poverty which influence policy makers are those of the rich who assume they know what poor people want and need. By emphasizing income and consumption other aspects are neglected. While the poor have numerous criteria of well-being and deprivation, it is outsiders who simplify them down to one or two or a few. Wants and needs are complex but basically relate to **survival, security and self-respect**.<sup>(18)</sup>

Poverty can mean a loss of respect which can be worse than hunger, since "without respect food won't go into the stomach". Concentrating on poor people's priorities challenges a dominant view of the poor as passive, irresponsible or conservative, and its political corollary that poor people are there to be planned for.<sup>(19)</sup> This makes it important to distinguish between poverty, vulnerability and well-being. Although vulnerability is often used as a synonym for poverty it is not simply another word for poverty. For, while poverty is static, vulnerability is a dynamic concept.

"Vulnerability is not the same as poverty. It means not lack or want, but defenselessness, insecurity and exposure to risk, shocks and stress... vulnerability has remained curiously neglected in analysis and policy, perhaps because of its confusion with poverty. Yet vulnerability and its opposite, security, stand out as recurrent concerns of poor people which professional definitions of poverty overlook."<sup>(20)</sup>

Local conceptions of poverty and vulnerability relate to fundamental values about basic entitlements and "needs". These vary substantially between and within different social groups, as well as between different spatial areas.<sup>(21)</sup>

Social policy, therefore, provides a different conceptual framework for the analysis of what causes, and perpetuates poverty. It identifies the importance of understanding poverty in terms of societal processes, rather than static indicators. It recognizes that poverty is contextually based and the consequence of inter-related factors at individual, household and community level. In addition, it recognizes that the poor access their social and economic needs in terms of different practical and strategic priorities and needs at different points in their lifecycle.

For instance a household can have food on the table, a new fridge, and children in school. However, if there is no adequate

child-care provision, households with children under school-age often cannot release women for income-generating work. If there is no running water due to city level shortages, if road conditions make transport slow and time-consuming, if dengue fever is rampant due to flooding, and if personal safety is problematic due to the scale of social unrest, the entire community is affected and experiences vulnerability. Finally, if human rights or political freedom are curtailed, this generally has an impact on civil society. The capacity to cope in such a context is dependent not only on individual capability but also, and more importantly, on household composition and community level organizational structures.

Measurements of poverty, therefore, need to recognize that indicators of vulnerability and well-being focus at individual, household and community levels – for beneficiaries can be targeted in different ways in relation to a variety of roles, relationships and social functions. While economic analysis tends to focus on individual or single-function household indicators, social analysis recognizes that focusing on one set of indicators misses the fact that it is the inter-relationship **between** the three which determines what poverty means to low-income men, women and children.

As Table 1 shows, individual level determinants and their associated indicators lend themselves to economic measurement and are commonly used. Per capita income and household type is an obvious example of the inter-relationship between individual and household level indicators – with the distinction between female and male headed households now recognized as potentially important in determining well-being. Less widely rec-

22. For a detailed definition of these different types of work, see Moser, C.O.N. (1993), *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training*, Routledge, London.

**Table 1: Determinants and Associated Indicators of Urban Vulnerability and Well-being at Different Levels**

<b>LEVEL</b>	<b>Determinants and associated indicators of urban vulnerability and well-being</b>
<b>INDIVIDUAL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– access to adequate nutrition and health care (infant mortality)</li> <li>– access to adequate education (drop-out rates)</li> <li>– access to adequate income (per capita income)</li> <li>– personal safety from domestic violence</li> <li>– access to credit</li> </ul>
<b>HOUSEHOLD</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– household type</li> <li>– household structure in terms of members in productive reproductive and community work<sup>(22)</sup></li> <li>– stage in the lifecycle</li> <li>– access to housing</li> </ul>
<b>COMMUNITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– access to, reliability and quality of basic needs of water, electricity, sanitation, roads, education and health care</li> <li>– personal safety from robbery and violence</li> <li>– capability and capacity of community based organizations</li> </ul>

23. A research project currently being undertaken by the Urban Development Division of the World Bank on "Urban Poverty and Social Policy in the Context of Adjustment", for instance, used three inter-related methodological tools. Quantitative data at individual and household level was collected through a random sample survey; a sub-sample survey in the same community using participant observation techniques provided detailed intra-household qualitative evidence; finally, a community survey gathered qualitative data on the availability and quality of basic services. These three complementary survey instruments and their use in data analysis highlighted complex issues that quantitative household level surveys often cannot identify. Preliminary analysis reveals, for instance, the importance of "hidden single mothers" in extended households, as well as the "hidden costs of adjustment" reflected in intensified work burden for women and unpaid family labour. This methodology is intended to provide results that are appropriate for locally responsive social policy interventions.

ognized is the inter-relationship between per capita income and household structure. For instance, evidence shows that where households have more than one adult or teenage female sharing reproductive work, the contribution to household income is greater than where there is only one woman responsible for all reproductive work.

At the community level, lack of access to sanitation and reliable, safe water has important consequences for individual health indicators. Equally important to per capita income is the lack of reliable electricity supplies in households with informal sector enterprises. Lack of safe transport in some contexts affects a teenage girl's access to educational facilities, and consequently drop-out indicators. In many urban contexts, where delivery mechanisms for local services increasingly rely on community participation, the capability and capacity of community based organizations are important determinants of service delivery, and consequently of health and other individual level indicators of well-being. Table 1, therefore, provides examples of determinants and their related indicators at different levels.

To these three levels can be added a fourth, more abstract, level, that of civil society. Indicators here include the degree of political freedom and human rights, important determinants being the structures and processes of negotiation among different actors in the planning process – and the extent to which they are participatory.

Finally, it is necessary to recognize that there may often be important distinctions between urban and rural indicators of well-being and poverty. Generally, indicators are undertaken at the national level and then disaggregated to urban and rural populations. However, community level indicators of personal safety, for instance, are far more important in an urban context where lack of social cohesion is generally much greater. Similarly, access to education may be much more critical for urban populations than for those in rural areas. Lack of subsistence agricultural production means that the only asset many poor urban populations have is their labour. Where high unemployment exists, skills and educational levels are often critical for access to even the most menial jobs. Again, in some contexts rural populations have access to traditional medicines not available to urban populations. Considerable work is still required if the differences between rural and urban contexts, as well as between different urban populations, are to be understood and correctly measured.

Measurements of poverty at individual, household and community level that focus on indicators of vulnerability and well-being also require research methodologies that go beyond statistical household surveys and include approaches that incorporate both quantitative and qualitative anthropological and sociological techniques.<sup>(23)</sup>

## V. SOCIAL POLICY AND URBAN PLANNING PRACTICE

**LIKE ECONOMIC POLICY**, social policy is prescriptive. It seeks to determine and measure through **social analysis**, **social appraisal** and **social assessments** the impact of change on social conditions or the social consequences of particular investments. This can include identification of the affected group, as well as determination of demand. In addition, through policies, programmes and projects its objective is to prescribe the means for more appropriate, equitable and socially sustainable urban development. The concern here is to translate multiple policy objectives into operational criteria for planning practice. This includes the design of effective delivery mechanisms that incorporate strategies for participation and develop responsive management systems. It is important to recognize, at the outset, that economic and social policy have different operational and institutional implications.

### a. Institutional Structures for Urban Social Policy

Whose social policy is it? Who will prescribe it? Historically, when a new planning agenda appears, the tendency is to create a new institutional structure and, with it, an associated planning agenda.<sup>(24)</sup> However, social policy, like economic policy, is not a sector and consequently cannot be “sectorized”. In recognizing that the problems of poverty reduction are inter-sectoral and that households do not plan sectorally but inter-sectorally, the institutional structure for operationalizing social policy cannot be located in a single “social policy” institution but must be “mainstreamed” within existing institutional structures.

Urban social policy focuses on those sectoral planning institutions that **prioritize** poverty reduction and are most effective in reaching target groups and including them in the planning process. To develop inter-sectoral social policy requires identification of the comparative advantage, in terms of sustainable institutional capacity, of different organizational structures at government, private sector, NGO and community based organization level to ensure locally owned and society specific solutions to poverty reduction.

The purpose of such interventions is to provide a comprehensive integrative framework for collaboration across and within different sectorally defined institutional structures. It provides not only social analysis and appraisal but also identifies inter-sectoral policy and investment priorities. This is intended to ensure more appropriate interventions within sectoral line institutions. It, therefore, provides the framework to identify key entry points for poverty reduction for both sector specific and sectorally related interventions, where there are cross-sectoral efficiencies in planning – such as in housing and health, fertility and female education, and transport and informal sector production to mention just a few.

One of the most difficult institutional problems in inter-institutional or intra-institutional collaboration is the fact that in

24. In the World Bank, for instance, four recently introduced planning issues have all been “institutionalized” into separate structures despite very differing objectives. Thus Women and Development, a new target group for planning, is addressed by the Gender Analysis and Policy Unit (previously the WID Unit); NGOs, alternative institutional structures, are addressed by a NGO Unit; participation as an alternative operational procedure is the responsibility of a Participation Learning Group; and the social dimensions of adjustment, ultimately a political concern was, until recently, institutionally based in a Social Dimension of Adjustment (SDA) Unit.

the identification of beneficiaries, the unit of targeting varies. Different agencies target different units. Institutions concerned with education, health, employment training and credit tend to target at the level of the individual whilst agencies for basic services and housing target households; those providing community services relating to social, recreational or safety (police force) target communities. There are also differences between “top-down” and “bottom-up” delivery systems. Water is delivered to households top-down but at the community level through bottom-up approaches. One of the tasks of a social policy framework is to make different target groups compatible for inter-sectoral interventions.

### b. Operational Procedures for Urban Social Policy

Social policy recognizes the limitation of “top-down” technocratic solutions. It provides the operational framework within which different actors can participate in the process of policy formulation and planning practice. To move beyond the rhetoric of participatory planning procedures requires acknowledgement of the multiple constraints that affect the practice of planned intervention. These are technical, organizational, political, social and economic in nature.

What does it mean at the level of urban development planning to be sustainable at individual, household and community levels? Which projects, programmes and institutions concerned with urban development have greatest potential for sustainability? This requires clarification of the concept of socially sustainable urban development. The distinction between different levels provides a useful means by which to assess and promote concrete interventions. Resources mobilized at the community level that make a project sustainable in the long term (socially and financially) depend on the extent to which participation has been integrated into the planning process – not simply as a **means** for project cost-sharing, efficiency or effectiveness but as an **end** for building beneficiary capacity and empowerment.<sup>(25)</sup> The more the urban poor are recognized as subjects of empowerment, and not merely as a working force to lower costs, the greater are the chances of achieving sustainable projects in the long term. The sustainability of a programme, on the other hand, depends on other factors that have broader spatial, economic and social elements. The same can be said about the sustainability of an institution. What happens in concrete successful urban development projects is that resources continue to be mobilized by the community after the project finishes.

Inputs change during implementation through a process of negotiation, such that outputs may be very different. This requires the identification and implementation of operational interventions that are based on a continuous and cyclical planning process. The details of such a process are complex, and beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice to say, they need to ensure flexible and incremental action in response to felt needs. Whilst the identification of opportunistic entry points is based

25. For a comprehensive analysis of community participation in urban development, see Moser, C.O.N. (1989), “Community participation in urban projects in the Third World”, *Progress in Planning* Vol.32, Part 2.

on negotiation and compromise, these must be grounded in longer-term strategic directions. This will require changes in operational procedures which may well make them more costly at the planning stage, as well as requiring new and different social and economic skill mixes in the staffing procedures of many agencies.

## VI. CONCLUDING COMMENT

**THIS PAPER PROVIDES** a preliminary discussion of the relationship between urban social policy and poverty reduction. It shows that social policy is both normative and prescriptive, concerned not only to determine the impact of change on social conditions (through social analysis or appraisal) but also with the prescription of more appropriate, equitable and economically sustainable policies.

To institutionalize and operationalize urban social policy is obviously a complex agenda that requires a more intensive level of involvement and allocation of resources than is currently the case. Many of the elements are already present, fragmented in different operational experiences. These include recent work on social assessments, community and participatory planning processes, gender planning, and the importance of alternative institutional structures such as NGOs and community based organizations. However, the commanding legitimacy and predominant position of economic development models did not occur overnight. It resulted from a long-term commitment to build models, generate data collection procedures and develop a common language. Social policy now requires the same prioritization so that procedural aspects can be developed, appraisal and performance indicators identified and, above all, so that staff in agencies, already cognizant with cost-benefit analysis and rates of return, can become confident with the language of social policy.

Ultimately, as many commentators have pointed out, the dualism between economic policy and social policy can be seen as a false dichotomy. This is certainly the case at the level of abstract discourse about the broad objectives of development which obviously are socio-economic in nature. However, at the more concrete level of planning practice, the picture is neither so harmonious nor so simple. It is the powerful dominance of "hard" economic determinism during the past decade of debt, adjustment and economic reform and the accompanying marginalization of "soft" social policy that makes it particularly important to demonstrate that social policy makes the transfer of resources (both cash and technical assistance) more efficient, effective and sustainable. The challenge for the 1990s is to bring the various components together into a comprehensive framework for urban social policy that is appropriate for operational practice.

