



# Chronic Poverty Advisory Network

## Addressing Spatial Poverty Traps<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This paper draws heavily on Bird, K., Higgins, K., and Harris, D. (2010) Spatial poverty traps: An overview. ODI Working Paper 321. CPRC Working Paper 161. London: ODI. and on Bird, K., Higgins, K., and Harris, D. (2010b) Policy responses to the spatial dimensions of poverty. ODI Working Paper 328. CPRC Working Paper 168. London: ODI.

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## 1. Introduction

This paper explores the impact that living in remote rural areas has on poverty dynamics and intersectionality. It brings together and updates earlier work by Bird et al. (2002), Bird and Higgins (2007), Bird, Higgins and Harris (2010), Higgins, Bird and Harris (2010) and Shepherd et al. (2019). It shows that people living in remote rural areas are more likely to be poor and their poverty is more likely to be long-duration, multidimensional and intersecting with other drivers of exclusion. In this paper we identify remote rural areas with high concentrations of poor people as being spatial poverty traps.

Billions of people around the world live in spatial poverty traps – geographic pockets of poverty, disadvantage and marginalisation. Spatial poverty traps are found in detached, remote rural areas and also in the burgeoning slums of cities. They are home to large numbers of people: around 1.8 billion people live in ‘less favoured,’ ‘low potential’ areas, and around 1 billion people live in slums in the developing world (Pender and Hazell, 2000, in CPRC, 2004; World Bank, 2008).

Section 2, below, explores what is meant by spatial poverty traps. Section 3 presents an overview of the evidence on spatial poverty traps. Section 4 discusses the relevance of the idea of spatial poverty traps to current policy debates. Section 5 provides an overview of policies to reduce regional inequalities and eradicate spatial poverty traps and Section 6 presents conclusions on the importance of place and space in poverty analysis and development policy.

## 2: Defining spatial poverty traps

Spatial poverty traps are where ‘geographic capital’ (the physical, natural, social, political and human capital of an area) is low and poverty is high, partly as a result of geographic disadvantage. Spatial poverty traps may be geographically remote (areas that are far from the centres of political and economic activity), ‘low potential’ or marginal (ecologically disadvantaged areas that have low agricultural or natural resources), ‘less favoured’ (politically disadvantaged areas) or ‘weakly integrated’ (areas that are poorly linked both physically and in terms of communication and markets) (CPRC, 2004). The endowments of the area explain a substantial proportion of the poverty of people living in it, controlling for individual and household characteristics, such as age, household composition or ethno-linguistic group (Jalan and Ravallion, 1997 and 2002; Ravallion and Wodon, 1999). Essentially, location goes a long way to explaining why the people that live there are poor.

‘First nature’ geographic characteristics, such as topography or proximity to the coast, play an important role in the existence of spatial poverty. But, as Kanbur and Venables (2005) highlight, ‘second nature geography’ – the geographical distribution of infrastructure and public services – is also critical in explaining spatial disparities. Bird et al. (2010) survey the literature to propose that the following factors contribute to the emergence of spatial poverty traps:

- **Agro-ecology:** An area’s agro-ecological characteristics can influence the ability of residents to meet their basic needs.
- **Institutional, political and governance failures:** Institutional, political and governance failures, at both national and sub-national levels, can contribute to the emergence of spatial poverty traps. The ‘contract’ between central government and citizens in remote, marginal and less favoured areas might be weak and, even when political will exists, the additional costs and constraints in working in a particular area may compromise the quality of service delivery (Farrington and Gerard, 2002, in Bird et al., 2010).

- **Stigma and exclusion:** Stereotypes based on ethnicity, race, language, religion or culture can lead to the social exclusion of and discrimination against people living in certain geographic locations. This can lead to political instability and insecurity and increasing economic and social inequality. Socially excluded groups may suffer from discrimination in labour, credit and housing, and also in other markets if they attempt to migrate to less disadvantaged areas. They may also be blamed for political unrest and crime, and they tend to be poorly connected to political elites and thus weakly protected.
- **Physical isolation and inadequate infrastructure:** In less favoured rural areas, low population densities can drive up costs of providing basic services and extending physical infrastructure in comparison with more densely populated urban areas, where a more effective political lobby for infrastructure investment may also exist.

In addition to these factors, crime and violent conflict can also lead to the emergence of spatial poverty traps.

### 3. Evidence of spatial poverty traps

Theoretical and conceptual literature establishing spatial disparities has been accompanied by numerous empirical studies that demonstrate the existence of spatial poverty traps. Following Jalan and Ravallion's original work in China, several studies demonstrate empirically the existence, and drivers, of spatial poverty traps. Bird and Shepherd (2003), in their empirical study of semi-arid zones in Zimbabwe, identify a clear link between high levels of remoteness, low levels of public and private investment and high incidence of chronic poverty. Escobal and Torero (2005) find similar results in Peru: they identify a strong association between spatial inequality and variation in private and public assets. Minot et al. (2003) argue explicitly for the presence of spatial poverty traps, given that interventions have been unable to address the small number of agro-climatic and market access variables that explain roughly three-quarters of poverty in rural Vietnam. In his work on Indonesia, Daimon (2001) describes the presence of a spatial poverty trap in which spatial factors, including quality of public goods in a district of residence, remoteness and rural residence, are statistically significant in determining levels of per capita expenditure and poverty rates. Christiaensen et al. (2005), in their cross-Africa study, find that the impact of economic growth on poverty reduction depends on how remote households are from economic centres and how well they are served by public infrastructure. Drawing on research from Madagascar, Fafchamps and Moser (2004) argue that, in the developing world, isolated regions tend to have more banditry and are more likely to harbour armed terrorist or insurgent groups than better connected areas, and that this can lead to the deepening of spatial poverty traps.

Spatial poverty traps present many challenges to development policy. One such challenge is that they may in fact be the result of development policies or interventions, as Fu (2004) finds in China, where regional disparities are related intimately to the structure of exports and foreign direct investment. The emphasis on a pattern of economic growth associated with foreign direct investment, labour-intensive production and processing-related exports in the coastal regions has attracted relatively mobile and efficient resources from the inland regions, but has offered only limited growth to the sending regions, exacerbating regional disparities. Another challenge spatial poverty traps present is their heterogeneity, which means that varied policy responses are required. For example, Okwi et al. (2006) find that a range of spatial factors explain the differentiation in welfare levels across provinces in Kenya, which therefore require variable policy responses.

#### 4. Relevance of spatial poverty traps

Why do spatial poverty traps deserve policy attention? First, the scale of the problem is significant. There is a clear and compelling body of evidence demonstrating that spatially determined factors can partially explain the poverty experienced by a large number of people in the world. The factors may be more responsive to policy interventions than household- and intra-household-level drivers of poverty.

Second, the poverty that people in spatial poverty traps experience is likely to be characterised by compound disadvantage: low returns on all forms of investment, partial integration into fragmented markets, social and political exclusion and inadequate access to public services. They are more likely to be not only income poor (poverty headcount) but also severely and chronically poor (poverty gap and poverty duration).

Third, the ‘bad neighbourhood effect’ constrains the opportunities of people living in spatial poverty traps and limits poverty exit. This means that, even if an individual in a spatial poverty trap has the entrepreneurial skills, the investment capital and the will to invest in a business, the returns on their investment will be lower than in a better connected area with higher geographic capital and a ‘good neighbourhood effect.’ Such areas are blighted, and enterprise success is harder to achieve. The bad neighbourhood effect extends its blighting effect to investments in human capital too. Parents investing in their children’s education in a spatial poverty trap are likely to receive a poorer return on their investment. Even if their children attend a good school and receive a technically good education, the absence of local and accessible successful role models and good entry-level employment opportunities will make success harder to come by.

Fourth, most national household survey data show a significant regional dimension to the incidence of poverty (Higgins et al., 2010), and spatial poverty traps can be found even when a country has experienced economic growth and aggregate reductions in the poverty headcount (CPRC, 2004). So, if reducing poverty, addressing chronic poverty and facilitating more equitable growth is a desired outcome, understanding and addressing this geographic dimension of poverty is crucial.

Finally, despite an acknowledgement that poverty is higher in certain regions and areas within regions, and the prominence of location in explanations of poverty, this fact has generally received low levels of attention in development policies and debates.

In Box 1, below, we outline some of the groups most likely to struggle to escape poverty in spatial poverty traps.

#### Box 1: Who may be trapped in poverty?

##### **The chronically poor**

Chronic poverty is extreme poverty that persists over years or a lifetime, and is often transmitted intergenerationally (CPAN, 2014). An estimated 320–443 million people live trapped in chronic poverty, disproportionately in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. They remain poor for much or all of their lives and their children are likely to inherit their poverty. The chronically poor experience multiple deprivations, including hunger, undernutrition, illiteracy, lack of access to safe drinking water and basic health services, social discrimination, physical insecurity and political exclusion. Many will die prematurely of easily preventable deaths.

##### *Who is chronically poor?*

Chronically poor people are mostly economically active, but are persistently poor owing to their position within households, communities and countries. People are most likely to be chronically poor when social and spatial

traps<sup>3</sup> overlap. High incidence of chronic poverty is found among social groups suffering from discrimination and prejudice, including ethnic minorities, migrants and bonded labourers, refugees and internally displaced persons. Wider social factors also play a role; age and life-cycle factors can be significant, with children, older people and widows particularly affected by chronic poverty. Larger households, with higher dependency ratios, appear to be more susceptible to chronic poverty in certain regions.

Around one third of all those who are extremely poor (below the international \$1.25 per person a day threshold) are also chronically poor. This is because of three layers of factors: their lack of assets or low returns to those assets, particularly in the face of adverse events; their lack of power and their inclusion in economies, politics and cultures on unfavourable terms; and a wider environment – the political settlement, macroeconomic policy and social norms – that can ease or exacerbate their poverty.

#### **The severely poor**

The severely poor are those surviving on \$0.70 per person per day<sup>4</sup> (CPAN, 2014). This is below the extreme poverty line of \$1.25 (updated to \$1.90). Severely poor households are also likely to be chronically poor (ibid.) and largely share these characteristics.

#### **The severely multi-dimensionally poor**

The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative defines multidimensional deprivation or poverty as being 'deprived in 3 of 10 assets and capabilities'; and severe deprivation as being deprived in 5 of 10 indicators (CPAN, 2014: 13). A total of 540 million people live in multidimensional poverty spread over 44 countries (ibid.: 17).

#### **People experiencing intersecting inequality or disadvantages**

A person's ethnic identity, gender, geographical location or other social characteristics (age, religion, disability, language) can all interact in ways that exclude him or her from a country's economy, political system and social life. Intersecting inequalities create overlapping disadvantages, reinforcing the exclusion or adverse incorporation of individuals or groups. The drivers of this inequality vary by context, but poverty is strongly associated with ascribed identities – race, caste, gender and ethnicity – and they are most pronounced when they intersect with disadvantaged locations and economic class (Kabeer, 2010, in Lenhardt and Samman, 2015: 9).

Lenhardt and Samman (2015) find that the poorest women from disadvantaged ethnic groups are the most likely to have been 'left behind' by progress in human development. They tend to have the fewest average years of education and their children have higher levels of mortality. The combination of women's place of residence, their ethnic group and their income level all help explain human development outcomes, with living in a rural area and being from a minority ethnic group particularly strong drivers of poor outcomes. Inequality in education associated with wealth and ethnicity is more stubborn to change than others, having changed less over the past 20 years than any of the other intersections the authors explored.

Lenhardt and Samman suggest that tracking the outcomes of people experiencing intersecting inequalities is necessary if progress against the SDGs is to be monitored effectively. A substantial investment in disaggregated data collection would be required to make these kinds of distinctions among people. SDG Target 17 aims to enhance capacity-building support to developing countries to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

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<sup>3</sup> Spatial poverty traps are areas where people are at higher risk of being trapped in poverty than elsewhere. They may be geographically remote, low-potential or less favoured. Spatial disadvantage can exist in urban as well as rural areas (CPRC, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> This threshold was identified as being the average consumption level of the poor in Sub-Saharan Africa (or in some cases this is below national food or severe poverty lines).

## 5. Policies to reduce regional inequality and eradicate spatial poverty traps

Reducing regional inequality and eradicating spatial poverty traps requires a multi-pronged approach that incorporates investment in soft and hard infrastructure (including roads, information and communication technologies, power supply, water and sanitation, schools and clinics), human capital formation (health, education), pro-poorest growth (social protection, agricultural and rural development policy, market information, fiscal policy and the enabling environment – including financial services, regulation, governance and anti-corruption, property law and justice sector reform) and the eradication of chronic, severe and intersectional poverty.

There is not the space in this brief paper to cover all of these areas of policy, so for infrastructure this paper focuses on power supply, for pro-poorest growth the focus is on agriculture, for human capital formation the focus is on education and for poverty eradication the focus is on the need for combined and sequenced policy approaches. These policy areas are presented as a set of case studies, from which lessons are drawn which may have wider application.

### Infrastructure

Investments in both hard and soft infrastructure are crucial to reduce regional inequality and the intensity of spatial poverty traps. Integration into national road networks is key, helping to reduce journey time and cost and so reduce price gradients and ease the integration of remote areas into national and international markets. We know that access to information is crucial for effective market functioning, transparency and improved governance. We also know that access to reliable and high-quality electricity improves education outcomes and productivity, enabling off-farm diversification, including agro-processing, manufacturing and services. It increases irrigation density, increasing yields and opportunities for agricultural diversification and the introduction of higher value crops. Local agro-processing and value addition is more likely to take place, increasing local agricultural returns.

This suggests that a key policy to eradicate spatial poverty traps could centre on ensuring energy and connectivity for all, through regulation, policy and investment to 1) ensure reliable road, electrical and digital connectivity for all, subsidising the extension of mobile networks through infrastructure investment, where necessary (CPAN, 2015: 8) and 2) provide subsidised and deferred-cost energy connection for high-quality service delivery (including off-grid).

The case study below presents the case of progress in domestic power supply in Viet Nam (Box 2).

#### Box 2: Extending power supply to poor rural households in Viet Nam

Viet Nam has delivered remarkable progress in extending power supply to rural communities and between 1990 and 2010, the country outpaced other countries at similar income levels in providing access to electricity. In 1990 only 14% of the population had an electricity connection. By 2010 this had increased dramatically to 97%. In some years over this period 2 million new households gained an electricity supply.

four key factors:

- consistent leadership from central government, with high level policy statements and progressively more demanding targets for connections;
- devolution of responsibility to local government, which was given flexibility in modes of delivery, allowing for innovation and adaptability to local conditions and appropriate donor support. Local innovation was permitted and in the 1990s communes or groups of households built distribution systems, purchased power from state owned power companies and on-sold to consumers, with different models for this function evolving. Regulation was later introduced, once lessons had been learned from innovation.
- appropriate donor support

- a flexible approach to energy sources and connection and unit pricing. Later, regulations of domestic electricity prices, was introduced, to extend access to poor households, with tariffs set so that higher consumption households subsidised the 'life line' tariff users

Additional factors have included:

- Linking policy on electrification with other policy areas
- Involvement of all levels of national and local government in implementation. Core infrastructure was put in place by the national government and local distribution and service provision was managed locally.
- Cost sharing between central and local government was crucial in extending infrastructure to remote rural areas. Investment in rural electrification totalled \$10.3 billion over the period 1990 to 2012. Government at all levels provided \$5 billion of this. Households, i.e. electricity consumers, have been a major source of financing for rural electrification in Viet Nam, contributing some \$3.4 billion between 1990 and 2012. Customers paid 100% of the capital costs in many cases, particularly in the early days of expansion. They almost all paid for the connection to their house, plus the meter and wiring, as a minimum. This reflects willingness to pay but did exclude some of the poorest households. Later, central government subsidised connections for remote and lower-income households, including with donor support.

Turning to the fuller story, expanding power connections in Viet Nam was partly made possible by a tenfold increase in electricity production between 1990 and 2010 from around 8,700 GWh to almost 95,000 GWh. The average rate of increase over this period was 12.7% per year, with more rapid growth in the mid-1990s and the early 2000s. Critical investments were also made in transmission and the distribution grid, with the construction of a 500 kV transmission line, 1,490 km long, in the early 1990s. This established a national grid and allowed the power produced by major hydropower plants to serve the whole country. Transmission losses were also brought down, making the system more efficient.

Demand increased from all sectors: industrial, agricultural and residential. Residential connections increased rapidly and the 2010 Viet Nam Household Living Standards Survey found that 97.2% of households used grid electricity as their main source of lighting, and a further 1.2% of households used batteries or generators. There was particularly rapid growth in access to electricity during the 1990s, with over 6% of the population gaining access to electricity every year between 1990 and 1996, meaning that between 1990 and 1998 access increased from 14% to 61%.

Post-war reconstruction in the late 1970s and early 1980s set the foundations for this progress. The high priority given to boosting rice production led to electrification in the rice-producing Red River Delta in the north and the Mekong Delta in the south so that electricity was available for irrigation pumps and post-harvest processing. Government support to rural electrification then increased in the 2000s, with an emphasis on remote areas and on household rather than commune connections. The national poverty-reduction programme, Program 135, targeted at disadvantaged communes in remote and mountainous areas, became one of the main vehicles providing government support for electrification. Investments in extending the national grid meant that by 2009 only 51 of Viet Nam's 9,000 communes (56,000 households) relied on off-grid power.

The progressive use of government targets to drive up the number of communes and then the number of households connected to an electricity supply delivered results, with additional targets seeking to reduce regional inequality and ensure that poor households in poor areas also obtained power connections. A low cost 'lifeline' tariff, aimed at poor households, set power bills at a low rate for households consuming less than 50 kWh per month. But households in the poorest quintiles were still less likely to have access to electricity (91.6% of households in the lowest income quintile, compared with 99.3% of those in the highest income group in 2010). Consumption levels differed by wealth, too. Almost all of those in the lowest income quintile consumed less than 100 kWh per month, and 60% were on the lifeline tariff, as were most of the households in the second and third income quintiles. Only around 20% of the richest quintile consumed less than 100 kWh per month, while around 25% consumed more than double that amount.

Source: Scott and Greenhill, 2014.

### **Pro-poor growth: agriculture**

Pro-poorest growth requires cross-ministerial action requiring governments to establish plans which identify priority policies for key ministries as well as cross-cutting interventions and collaborative ways

of working. These should emphasise enabling agriculture (particularly smallholder agriculture) alongside creating healthy conditions for the informal non-farm economy. This emphasis is justified by the strong concentration of people in spatial poverty traps in the agriculture sector. The agricultural sector is also crucial in underpinning pro-poor growth and providing a spring board for non- and off-farm activities in many countries. In order to ensure the poorest and most marginalised people are included in economic growth processes on good terms, governments.

Specific interventions to eradicate spatial poverty traps should centre on limiting the harmful impact of distance from markets by investments in infrastructure, including roads, ICTs and power, providing equalising subsidies so that even remote communities can access mobile phone networks and power supply for home and business use, as well as supporting market development (e.g. financial sector reform to increase access to mobile banking, improved access to market information).

In spatial poverty traps we see markets access and market functioning highly constraining returns to agriculture and the transmission of market incentives. Where markets function well, interventions should focus on improving market access and the ability of the poorest farmers to obtain good terms in market interactions. To support the negotiating power of the poorest farmers it may well be helpful to to strengthen farmers' organisations to represent the poorest producers (including women, disabled, older farmers and disadvantaged ethnic/caste/race groups) to the private sector and government. Such organisations can take the place of government action where the state, by choice or because of limited capacity, provides limited support to the agriculture sector. They can also provide enhanced negotiating power in national and international value chains for both inputs and outputs, and can offer members improved access to credit, training and information.

Where market functioning is not competitive, governments could work with private and civil society intermediaries to ensure disadvantaged groups have access to mobile-based information systems (see Box 3). This is important in enabling improved market integration and negotiating power for poor and marginalised people. Where disadvantaged farmers rely on traders coming to them, the state could work with partners to 1) increase the availability of accessible intermediate transport and 2) link footpaths to feeder roads, if possible, through labour-based public works. These interventions will serve to improve the link disadvantaged farmers have with both markets and services, reducing both time costs and out of pocket expenses.

### **Box 3: Mobile-based agricultural information services – Kenya**

Kenya has two large projects that aim to reduce the cost and time it takes smallholder farmers to access market information and obtain information on new inputs.

The Kenya Agricultural Commodities Exchange (KACE), a private sector firm and the only national agricultural commodity exchange in Kenya, deals in a variety of commodities, of which maize and beans are the most heavily traded. KACE collects, processes, updates and disseminates market information daily to farmers and other market stakeholders through its Mobile Information Systems. Daily updated price information enables farmers to compare prices in different national markets and negotiate accordingly with buyers. It also provides access to an online auction and access to agricultural extension messages, and organises farmers into local groups in order to increase their bargaining power.

The government-owned National Farmer's Information Service (NAFIS) is an information service developed by the National Agriculture and Livestock Extension Programme (established in 2008). Farmers access extension information by means of an automated phone service or via the NAFIS website, which includes site-specific information provided by field extension officers. The only cost to the user is the cost of the call, and the service is provided in Kiswahili and English.



The NAFIS service has not been evaluated but KACE is known to reach 1 million farmers a day through radio, SMS or direct contact (2011 figures). In addition to this, an estimated 250,000 small-scale traders in agricultural commodities access their services daily. Qualitative research has shown that information and communication technology illiteracy prevents some farmers accessing information, and they rely instead to some extent on the infrequent paper reports issued by KACE. However, an estimated 80–90% of the farmers in the areas served by KACE use its services and have reported improved prices; 60% of traders have also reported improved incomes.

Source: Karugu (2010).

### Human capital formation: education in Uganda and Ghana

Capabilities based on high levels of human capital are crucial for sustained poverty escapes and investments in these areas are inevitably be central to tackling spatial poverty traps. Universal provision can provide a starting point but need to be supplemented by interventions that address the key constraints of particular localities. The introduction of free Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Uganda helped to increase enrolment and retention of both boys and girls in rural areas but needed to be complemented in other areas to equalise access and attainment in the post conflict environment of Northern Uganda (see Box 4). The Model Secondary School programme in Ghana, built and resourced high quality schools in each district to reduce the disparity in quality between schools in poor rural districts and the capital. While this drove progress, the programme did not truly level the playing field, as the starting point in some districts was so much lower than in others (see Box 5).

#### Box 4: The role of Universal Primary Education in equalising regional disparity in Uganda<sup>5</sup>

Uganda led the way in delivering free universal primary education to children from all backgrounds in both rural and urban areas. It rapidly increased enrolment and retention rates of both girls and boys in rural areas, including remote rural areas. Improvements were even seen in Northern Uganda, where conflict and insecurity had ravaged the built infrastructure, undermined local institutions and made walking to school unsafe for a generation of children.

This progress has taken place in the context of significant development progress over the last three decades. Poverty in Uganda declined to 21.4% in 2018, from 56% in 1992/93 (UBOS, 2018). Prudent macroeconomic policies generated robust growth during the late 1990s and early 2000s, averaging 5.6% over the five years to 2004/05 and 3.9% in 2017 (World Bank, 2019<sup>6</sup>). HIV/AIDS adult prevalence declined significantly from around 18% in the early 1990s to 6.4% in 2005 and 5.9% in 2017<sup>7</sup> and primary level net enrolment rates increased from 62.3% in 1992 to 92% for girls and 94% for boys in 2006 (World Bank, 2007a) and 100.32% for girls and 97.71% for boys in 2017 (UNESCO, 2019<sup>8</sup>). However, Uganda remains one of the poorest countries in the world, however, ranked 162 out of 189 countries by the Human Development Index (UNDP statistical update, 2018<sup>9</sup>), with per capita income of US\$606<sup>10</sup> (2017), life expectancy of 59.5 (2016) and population growth amongst the highest in the world at 3.26% (World Bank, 2017<sup>11</sup>).

Uganda is still highly unequal and regional inequality remains a problem. Comparing welfare indicators across the four regions of Uganda, the Northern region has the highest poverty rate, highest annual average population

<sup>5</sup> This box draws heavily on material presented in Bird and Higgins, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> World Bank data, downloaded February 2019.

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=UG>

<sup>7</sup> UNAIDS data. <http://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/uganda>

<sup>8</sup> UNESCO data. <http://uis.unesco.org/country/UG>

<sup>9</sup> UNDP. [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018\\_human\\_development\\_statistical\\_update.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018_human_development_statistical_update.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> World Bank. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=UG>

<sup>11</sup> World Bank data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.GROW>

growth, highest fertility levels, highest proportion of people living in a hut and lowest proportion of people owning a mobile phone. Although poverty in Northern Uganda fell by 30% in the 20 years from 1993 and 2013 (World Bank, 2016<sup>12</sup>), this is compared to substantial progress made in the West and Central regions of Uganda, where poverty has declined by around 60% since 1992/3 (World Bank, 2007c: 3). If real consumption in Northern Uganda had grown between 1992 and 2003 at the same rate as the rest of Uganda, it would be 38% higher, pushing aggregate national consumption approximately 3.3% higher (Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 2004: 18).

Slower progress in economic growth and poverty reduction in the North can be explained by the long run conflict, insecurity and displacement. More than 1.3 million people – mainly in the Acholi sub-region comprising the districts Kitgum, Gulu and Pader – were displaced. Women and children represented 80% of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and were the direct targets of attacks, abductions and sexual violence. The right of access to essential services in health, nutrition, safe water, shelter, protection and education by the most vulnerable populations was largely unfulfilled (UNICEF, 2007: 1).

Regional inequality also exists in terms of education quality, performance and completion. The North lags behind due to the impact of the conflict on education infrastructure, resources and systems is significant. Schools, and their teaching materials and resources, were destroyed through looting and the majority of schools were displaced. In the Kitgum district, approximately 86% of schools were displaced and temporarily established in other schools, which results in immense overcrowding and inadequate infrastructure such as classrooms and latrines (Kitgum District, 2005: 38). This affected the pupil to classroom ratio and teaching effectiveness.

Teachers did not want to take up posts in the North. For example, in late 2006, 500 teaching positions were advertised in Kitgum District, but only 210 applications were submitted, and out of these only 180 applications were suitable.<sup>13</sup> There is also a financial disincentive to teach in the North. While in other regions parents tend to supplement teachers' salaries, in the North families rarely have the capacity to do this. This means that a teacher in Kampala might receive additional payments amounting to nearly four times their salary, plus free local accommodation, while a teacher in the North must make do with their salary alone. (Many schools in the North lack teacher accommodation, and teachers must commute long distances, contributing to teacher absenteeism).

The depth and severity of pervasive poverty in northern Uganda also affected the learning environment, particularly in the immediate post-conflict period. Through to the late 2000s, the majority of households in Acholiland were displaced, with little or no access to livelihoods and were dependent on humanitarian agencies for survival. This drove down primary enrolment and attendance. Poverty meant that some children had to work before and after school. Hunger and tiredness hampered their concentration.

Conflict and poverty also contributed to perpetuating gender inequalities in educational access, with nearly twice as many more boys finishing their primary education as girls.

UPE (Universal Primary Education), introduced in 1996, involved the abolition of tuition and other costs. It removed a significant obstacle to education and signalled the importance the government placed on education, with the education budget increasing from 1.6% to 3.8% of GDP. UPE had a significant impact on enrolment across the country, with strong pro-poor and gender equalising effects. Those in the poorest quintile gained most and within the poorest quintile, the enrolment of girls increased more than 300 percent between 1992/03 and 2002/03 (World Bank, 2006b: 49). At the regional level, the impact was also significant, with a girls' enrolment in the Northern Region increasing from 40 to 73 per cent between 1992/93 and 2002/03.

Unfortunately, UPE has not had the same equalising effect on education quality or performance. Essentially, the universal approach that underpins UPE does not appear to be targeted enough, or take into account the challenges facing Northern Uganda in terms of education delivery, to reduce disparities in education quality and performance. Northern districts are resource constrained, despite the inflow of resources from government and humanitarian agencies and these resources and those to deliver UPE has been unable to compensate for the impact of conflict and insecurity.

<sup>12</sup> World Bank. <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/381951474255092375/pdf/Uganda-Poverty-Assessment-Report-2016.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> District Education Officer at Education Sector Coordination Meeting, Kitgum, 21 July 2006.

### Box 5: Equalising regional disparity: Secondary Education in Ghana<sup>14</sup>

Ghana has innovated to reduce regional inequality in education outcomes. It has invested heavily in the secondary education sector and ensured that each district has a 'model' secondary school, which can provide facilities equivalent to the best schools in the country.

The context for this is that Ghana has made substantial development progress in recent years. The economy has seen encouraging levels of growth and poverty has declined but many development challenges remain. For example, weaknesses in social and human development are reflected in its poor performance as measured by the Human Development Index (140 out of 189 countries, in 2017) (UNDP, 2018) compared to its rather better, and improving GDP per capita levels (now \$2,046)<sup>15</sup>.

The probability of being poor in Ghana is associated with the following characteristics: living in the northern regions (versus other regions); rurality (versus urbanity); being in a household with an older household head (poverty tendency increases with household head age); larger households (versus smaller households); marriage (versus being single, separated or divorced); having low levels of education (the probability of being poor decreases as education of the household head increases); being reliant on agriculture for your livelihood (followed by manufacturing and construction); being self-employed in agriculture (followed by wage earners in the private informal sector) and not owning any land (versus land ownership) (Coulombe and Wodon, 2007: 29-30).

Inequality poses a significant development challenge for Ghana, which remains high with a gini of 42.4<sup>16</sup>. This is illustrated by the differences in consumption between the rich and poor. The consumption per equivalent adult at the 90th percentile of the population was 5.2 times higher in 1991/92 than at the tenth percentile (Coulombe and Wodon, 2007: 18). By 2005/06, this ratio had increased to 6.4.

Regional inequality is a significant driver of inequality in Ghana. Poverty is much lower in Accra and around the Rural Forest area than in the northern regions (Northern, Upper East and Upper West) (Coulombe and Wodon, 2007: 4), with Northern Ghana lagging behind the rest of the country (Jebuni, McKay and Shepherd, 2007: 3). Addressing inequality within and between regions has been identified as central to improving Ghana's economic performance and human development indicators (International Development Association and International Monetary Fund, 2006: 3; World Bank, 2007).

Vigorous human resource development is prioritised by the government, which hopes to create a well-trained labour force to drive and sustain economic growth. This is reflected in the provision of Free Universal Basic Education, which aims to provide two years of kindergarten, six years of primary school and three years of junior high school free to all children in Ghana (Government of Ghana, 2007). Education access indicators have improved significantly, with both primary and secondary school enrolment increasing (World Bank, 2007b)<sup>17</sup>. However, gross and net enrolment figures are still below the sub-Saharan Africa average at the primary level, although they are above average at the secondary level (World Bank, 2006a). There is a strong correlation between poverty and low primary and secondary net and gross enrolment rates (Coulombe and Wodon, 2007: 67), and despite free basic education, poorer people are still less able to educate their children<sup>18</sup>.

Education access<sup>19</sup> and education performance<sup>20</sup> have a regional dimension in Ghana. Persistent geographic disparities in education access are recognised as important in policy circles in Ghana. In Ghana, having secondary

<sup>14</sup> This box draws heavily on material presented in Bird and Higgins, 2007.

<sup>15</sup> World Bank data. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?end=1960&locations=KR-GH-JP&start=1960&view=bar>

<sup>16</sup> World Bank data. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=GH>

<sup>17</sup> At the primary level, the gross enrolment ratio has increased from 72.1% in 1990 to 88.4% in 2005 and the net enrolment ratio has increased from 52.4% in 1990 to 65% in 2005. At the secondary level, gross enrolment has increased from 37.4% in 2000 to 46.4% in 2006 and net enrolment has increased from 31.8% in 2000 to 37.0% in 2005 (World Bank, 2007b).

<sup>18</sup> In 2005/06, at the secondary level, net and gross enrolment was been 36.1% and 44.2% in poor urban households compared with 57.7% and 72.6% in non-poor urban households. In rural areas, net and gross enrolment was 22.3% and 39.1% in poor rural households compared with 25.6% and 45.0% in non-poor rural households (Coulombe and Wodon, 2007: 67).

<sup>19</sup> Measured in terms of gross enrolment rate and net enrolment rate.

<sup>20</sup> Measured in terms of Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) pass rates.

education is important for sustained poverty escapes. Completing primary education does not deliver a statistically significant gain in earnings, but secondary education, particularly second tier secondary education, does (Coulombe and Wodon, 2007: 52). However, limited investment in rural secondary schools through the 1980s and 1990s had led to heavy competition for elite secondary schools, which were all located in urban areas.

The government has responded with its model secondary school policy, which involves upgrading a secondary school in each district to a level that could compete with leading schools in the country. A total of 46 schools were identified for upgrades<sup>21</sup>.

The impact of the model senior secondary school policy on reducing regional inequalities in education outcomes is unclear. However, some have criticised the model secondary school policy for emphasising equal distribution of investment by district rather than targeting disadvantaged areas and marginalised populations to achieve pro-poor and geographically equalising outcomes. By failing to target resources to the poorest districts - or the districts with the worst education facilities – the government is missing an opportunity to bring districts with the weakest educational facilities and performance up to a minimal level, set by government, as acceptable. Students must also meet the senior secondary school admission criteria, which is more challenging for students from poor households and poor districts. The policy, therefore, does not address fundamental underlying inequalities.

On the other hand, the potential for this policy to reduce regional inequalities in senior secondary education in Ghana is recognised. The policy does not address underlying structural inequalities in the short term but it may have the potential to do so over the longer term. Properly resourced schools may attract teachers to remote and rural areas, motivate teaching staff and therefore improve education outcomes. It may improve the chances of students from remote and rural districts gaining admission to competitive universities and some may return to their districts as teachers.

### **Poverty eradication: combined and sequenced policies**

The *2014–15 Chronic Poverty Report: the road to zero extreme poverty* argued that three objectives had to be achieved to get to zero poverty: chronic poverty had to be tackled; impoverishment had to be stopped; and escapes from poverty needed to be sustained. The report identified 14 areas of policy critical to eradicating extreme poverty. The table below shows how these policies can enable upward mobility and poverty exits, support resilience and stop impoverishment or sustain poverty escapes (see Table 1, below). Social protection, education, enabling pro-poorest growth, universal access to sexual and reproductive health measures and enabling gender equality support upward mobility, prevent downward mobility and help sustain poverty escapes, while the remaining policy areas have more specific roles in supporting people move out of and stay out of poverty.

Some people living in chronic poverty are stuck on the consumption floor, which has barely moved in several decades (Ravallion, 2014). They may be experiencing ‘intersecting inequalities’ (where attributes such as age, religion, gender are embodied in the same person). In other words, they experience multiple disadvantages (Kabber, 2010). These people may require carefully selected and sequenced combinations of interventions if they are to exit poverty in a sustained way.

Some additional policies are needed in particular contexts: disaster risk management is a priority only if environmental disasters are frequent or likely and impactful; anti-discrimination measures are important everywhere, but for poverty eradication they are important if discrimination is one of the causes of persistent poverty or impoverishment; conflict prevention is especially relevant where there is a risk of conflict, and this is more likely where there has been previous conflict.

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<sup>21</sup> There are 478 public senior secondary schools and 127 approved private senior secondary schools in Ghana (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, 2007: 8).

**Table 1: Cross-cutting and dedicated policies to tackle chronic poverty, stop impoverishment and sustain escapes from extreme poverty**

Objective	Enable upward mobility and poverty exits	Support resilience and stop impoverishment	Sustain poverty escapes
<b>Cross-cutting policies</b>	Social protection		
	Education, including pre- and post-primary and links to labour markets		
	Pro-poorest growth measures, including employment quality measures, financial services, access to financial services, infrastructure – especially energy – and support for internal migrants		
	Universal access to reproductive and sexual health services		
	Gender equality – generic and context-specific measures		
<b>Objective-specific policies</b>	Anti-discrimination measures	Conflict prevention measures	Land policy reforms enabling mobility (renting in/out)
	Affirmative actions	Disaster risk management	
	Access to justice	Universal health coverage	Strong regional development policies
	Agricultural market improvements	Insure against other major risks – asset loss, ill-health, deaths	

Source: CPAN (2014).

A study to explore poverty trajectories using mixed methods<sup>22</sup> study in eleven countries<sup>23</sup> confirmed that sustained escapes from poverty rely on effort that: (1) tackle chronic poverty, (2) prevent impoverishment, and (3) ensure escapes from poverty are sustained over time (Diwaka and Shepherd, 2018). It also found that sustained escapes vary in prevalence across countries and in some countries the rate at which rural households descended into poverty (became impoverished) sometimes exceeded the rate at which other households achieved a sustained escape.

Managing risk is central to escaping from poverty and avoiding from falling back into poverty again (Diwaka and Shepherd, 2018). Risks include agricultural risks, asset theft, ill health, adverse gender norms, and conflict and disasters. Poverty reduction driven by economic growth, human development and progressive social change was found to be much faster, particularly in Africa, where poor people are well protected against major risks. Policies and programmes can reduce some of these risks but policy makers need to firstly recognise that their efforts to reduce poverty are being undermined by risks and then develop risk management policy portfolios (ibid.).

The study also found that agriculture remains important amidst decreasing land sizes and incomes; adverse gender and other social norms can prolong chronic poverty; the conflict-climate nexus is associated with high rates of impoverishment; health shocks in sequence propel poverty descents; coping strategies to ill health vary in the absence of health insurance and that health insurance and quality services are critical to protecting households from downward mobility. The research also found that sustained escapes from poverty are commonly produced by combinations of factors and while female headed households are constrained, they still exert agency (Diwaka, Shepherd and Eichsteller, 2018).

<sup>22</sup> The research involved: (i) analysis of panel surveys tracking the same households over time, from the late 1990s to present; (ii) key informant interviews and focus group discussions between 2016 and 2018; and (iii) life history interviews also between 2016 and 2018 to investigate pathways of sustained poverty escapes.

<sup>23</sup> Africa (Tanzania, Rwanda, Niger, Malawi, Ethiopia, Uganda, rural Kenya) and Asia (Philippines, Nepal, rural Cambodia, rural Bangladesh).

## **6. Conclusions: the importance of 'place' and 'space' in poverty analysis and development policy**

The attention given to addressing spatial inequality has wavered. Although the impact of distance has been reduced by technology over the past three centuries and transport costs are currently shrinking, they may well rise again due to petroleum scarcity and pressure to reduce global warming. In addition, decreasing costs for transport are not experienced universally. To give two examples: in Pader, Northern Uganda, it takes two hours to travel on unpaved roads from one end of the district to the other – a journey of less than 100km. This journey is unaffordable for many villagers, whose travel is limited to journeys on foot and so within a radius of home of around 20km. Another example is from Zimbabwe, where many people cannot access basic health services because of their inability to afford public transport. Also, connecting people to services, markets and wider society can be complex in practice. Place and space remain important in determining economic growth and poverty outcomes, even in this relatively connected world.

There is a need for spatially informed analysis and policymaking capable of responding to the challenge. Poverty analysis and development policy must address both a location's spatially specific characteristics as well as its wider integration into regional, national and global contexts. In practice, such policies operate in the middle ground between strictly universal and strictly targeted approaches. Those which rely too heavily on principles of universality fail to recognise the importance of the location-specific challenges inherent where geographic capital is low and poverty is high. We see this in the case studies from Ghana and Uganda, where the focus was on universalism. Providing equally good basic services in geographically isolated areas is likely to have a high cost per capita and high transaction costs. Effective delivery is dependent on the presence of effective hard (roads, power, water and sanitation) and soft (schools, clinics) infrastructure, as well as the political inclination and will to provide equally good services (despite the higher unit cost) in disadvantaged areas. Amartya Sen's work on individual capabilities has argued persuasively on the need to adapt universal policies to meet a variety of needs at the individual level (Sen, 1999). However, this concept has failed to develop similar traction in discussions of space and place in the broader development discourse.

Conversely, development policy that is overly decentralised, in an attempt to meet local needs, may lose the wider perspective and, as a result, not address issues of equity, inequality or the movement of people, goods and information between areas, or any other relational concept. As Rodríguez-Pose and Gill (2004) argue, the shift in global policy towards decentralisation and devolution 'reflects a subtle, but profound, renunciation of the traditional equalisation role of national government, in favour of conditions fostering economic and public competition, and leading to greater development of initially rich and powerful regions to the detriment of poorer areas.'

Regional growth trajectories can be path dependent, and the types of relationships that develop between areas mean initial patterns of poverty have significant consequences for future patterns of growth (World Bank, 2005). A mix of approaches is therefore necessary in order to build a nation state in which populations that currently exist on the periphery are included as equal participants in the social, economic and political dimensions of the development project, thus facilitating the transfer across time and space of not only goods and services but also ideas.

Spatially informed policymaking has the potential not only to facilitate integration but also to help manage the nature of that integration. Growth does not inevitably spill over or trickle down, not only to those people or places that are not 'well connected to those prosperous parts' (World Bank, 2008), but also to those that are connected through adverse forms of inclusion (Bird et al., 2002; CPRC, 2004; Kanbur and Venables, 2005). Development is not a linear process where some areas are 'left behind,' but rather a process by which some areas, and people within those areas, may be poor and may

receive inadequate services, security and governance, precisely because of the way they are integrated economically, socially and politically into national, regional or global webs of interaction. In other words, integration is important, but it is the nature of that integration that determines the distribution of cost and benefit (CPRC, 2004; du Toit and Hickey, 2007).

Policies that focus on enabling efficient growth through agglomeration to attract investment and the efficient movement of labour assume that poor people in lagging regions and spatial poverty traps will be both willing and able to relocate for work. Evidence from India suggests that the poorest do not have the kinship networks, the skills or the savings to enable them to move and also to fully engage in society should they reach receiving areas (Bird et al., 2002; Phan and Coxhead, 2007). They may want to move, but they may also be unable to. This means that it is not enough simply to enable agglomeration, with the assumption that labour markets will function in such a way as to move labour efficiently to where it is needed, generating wealth and spreading it widely. Instead, government policies and programmes are needed to deliver services to hard-to-reach populations in spatial poverty traps in order to build their capabilities and agency so they can not only migrate but also benefit from migration. There may be challenges in delivering quality services to spatial poverty traps, thus limiting poor people's capacity to migrate.

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