

The Stages-of-Progress Methodology: Evolution and Uses

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. ORIGINS: How do people come to be poor and for what reasons?
2. REMOVAL: Why do some (but not other) poor people escape poverty? What reasons?
3. EXTENT: How high do people escaping poverty usually rise?

Hardly any answers were available:

- Stocks measured (rarely flows)
- Handful of two-period studies
- Rarely probed WHY questions
- Methods gaps...critical

Developing a New Methodology: STAGES OF PROGRESS

- Retrospective (safeguards and triangulation)
- Community based
- Local understandings: assets and capabilities
- Variable time-horizons (8-25 years)
- Robust and reliable
- Identification of reasons

Grassroots Investigations in 400 diverse communities of

INDIA

KENYA

PERU

UGANDA

NORTH CAROLINA, USA

Poverty Dynamics tracked for > 35,000 households

Initial Results

	Escaped Poverty	Became Poor	<i>Change in Poverty</i>
Rajasthan (35 villages)	11%	8%	3%
Gujarat (36 villages)	9%	6%	3%
Andhra (36 villages)	14%	12%	2%
W. Kenya (20 villages)	18%	19%	-1%
Uganda (36 villages)	24%	15%	9%
Peru (20 communities)	17%	15%	2%
North Carolina (13 communities)	23%	12%	11%

Lessons learned

- ✓ **Escapes and descents in parallel**
- ✓ **Asymmetric reasons**
- ✓ **Not one but two parallel policies**
- ✓ **Chains of ordinary events**
- ✓ **Little streams: contextualize, decentralize
(decentralized inquiries and projects)**
- ✓ **Limited Upward Mobility**

STAGES-OF-PROGRESS METHODOLOGY

Seven Steps

Step 1. Getting together a representative community group

Step 2. Discussing the objectives of the exercise

Step 3. Defining “poverty” collectively in terms of Stages of Progress

Stages of Progress (Rajasthan)

1. Food for the family	
2. Send children to school	
3. Some clothes to wear outside the house	
4. Start repaying debts	
5. Repair the existing shelter	<i>Poverty Cutoff</i>
6. Dig a well	
7. Purchase cows and buffaloes	
8. Construct a <i>pakka</i> (brick) shelter	
9. Purchase ornaments	<i>Prosperity Cutoff</i>
10. Radio, tape recorder, refrigerator	
11. Motorcycle	
12. Tractor, car	

Initial stages before the poverty cutoff:

STAGE	Rajasthan	Gujarat	W. Kenya
1.	Food	Food	Food
2.	Primary education	Some Clothing (to wear outside)	Some Clothing (to wear outside)
3.	Some Clothing (to wear outside)	Primary education	House repair (roof renovation)
4.	Retiring accumulated debt	Retiring accumulated debt	Primary education
5.	House repair (roof renovation)	House repair (roof renovation)	Small animals (chicken, sheep, goat)
6.		Hiring in a small tract of land	

- STAGES OF PROGRESS METHOD

- Step 4. Define “X years ago” in terms of a well known signifying event
- Step 5. List all households. Ascertain stage for each household at present time and in earlier period
- Step 6. Categorize all present-day households:
 - A. Poor 25 years ago and poor now (Remained poor)
 - B. Poor then and not poor now (Escaped poverty)
 - C. Not poor then but poor now (Became poor)
 - D. Not poor then and now (Remained non-poor)

STAGES OF PROGRESS METHOD

Step 7. For a random sample (25-40%) of households in each category, investigate reasons for change or stability

I. Community inquiry:

Comparative perspective
Probing

II. Household inquiry:

Verify what the community has said
Go deeper into reasons

Training is critical. Verification and triangulation.



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Stage – and assets (recorded 7 years ago)

STATUS7	Land (<i>bighas</i>)	Large Animals	Small Animals	<i>Kaccha</i> house
Very Poor (Stage 1-3)	3.6	1.8	2.8	86%
Poor (Stage 4-5)	5.5	2.5	3.7	77%
Middle (Stage 6-8)	8.1	3.1	5.1	51%
Better Off (Stage 9+)	10.6	4.3	3.1	22%