

CHRONIC POVERTY AND REMOTE RURAL AREAS

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Abstract

This paper is a first attempt at putting the case that people living in remote rural areas (RRAs) account for a substantial proportion of the chronically poor. The evidence for this will be gathered from country studies, longitudinal quantitative and qualitative micro-level studies, and the growing volume of work on spatial poverty traps. It is a substantial research exercise to identify where the chronically poor are, who they are, and why they are chronically poor. This paper will be able only to make an initial informed guess at the scale of chronic poverty in RRAs.

However, there are strong theoretical and empirical reasons for the prevalence of chronic poverty in RRAs. Spatial poverty traps result from low endowments of 'geographic capital' (the physical, social and human capital of an area), with one household's poverty reinforcing another's. Out-migration leaves behind insecure asset-depleted 'residual' populations with the cards stacked against them: high dependency ratios, stigma, and low reserves of social capital.

High levels of risk characterise many RRAs, and contribute to the difficulties of emerging from poverty as well as the likelihood of destitution. This is true for ill-health and injury, natural disaster, harvest failure, terms-of-trade deterioration and reduced access to work. It may also be true of violence and conflict. By definition, RRAs are the other side of the coin: while major conurbations are located in favourable areas, RRAs are distant from these. Risk degrades assets, impoverishes the most vulnerable, and, where the density of poor and risk-prone households is high, prevents neighbouring households climbing out of poverty.

Social exclusion offers another perspective. While access to natural resources may be less of an issue in some RRAs, access to information, opportunities and connections goes a long way to explain persistent poverty. Exclusion is strongly linked to both state and market failures. Sources of exclusion include: physical isolation, ethnicity and religious discrimination, bureaucratic barriers, (tarmac) road bias, corruption, intimidation and physical violence, and the nature of the local political élite. Adverse incorporation is also more likely in areas remote from dynamic social change and the development of an active civil society to challenge historic power holders.

We hypothesise that RRAs are often insecure and conflict-prone. Local or national élites can use the disaffection stemming from exclusion and deprivation to mobilise disgruntled youth. RRAs are sometimes deliberately left with poor governance to enable élites to cash in on illegal trading opportunities. In future research, an attempt will be made to map conflicts at a regional and national level, in order to further investigate the relation between remoteness, conflict, vulnerability and poverty.

Democracy seems at first sight to have little to offer the poor of RRAs. An exception to this is the greater emphasis on the prevention of destitution in democracies compared to non-democratic regimes. Well-institutionalised democratic politics *can* bring benefits to the poor as a whole. But the chronically poor may be a less attractive constituent for institutional party politics, as it is difficult and likely expensive to deal with their problems within electoral periods, and the votes of the marginalised and excluded may be perceived as counting for less. It is likely to be more difficult for politicians to deliver on commitments to RRAs, which

require high levels of resourcing, and may also require significant improvements to governance as a pre-condition. However, in the long term, democracy is likely to facilitate the development of greater political capabilities of poor people. The question of how to increase social solidarity at national and local level is key for RRAs.

There is little evidence that devolution of power is good for the poor. However, in RRA it would seem that a strong degree of decentralisation (as opposed to devolution) is essential to adapt decisions to the different environment of an RRA. RRAs are likely to require substantial additional government capacity in order to achieve the same standards of provision, given the additional difficulties of government in RRAs. The parameters of good governance for RRAs need to be analysed afresh – they are unlikely to be the same as the prescriptions at national level.

The paper argues that there has been a widespread ‘policy failure’ in RRAs. The focus on livelihoods development, based on successes in non-remote areas did not take account of the special risk, exclusion and marginalisation characteristics of RRAs. Attacking these causes of persistent poverty would involve a greater emphasis on human capital and security. Livelihood diversification would then become more of a possibility. Policy sequencing is therefore critical. The neo-liberal policy discourse turned to human capital development in the 1990s and the World Development Report for 2000/1 has announced a renewed and welcome focus on security, which is, however, yet to be operationalised.

1 Introduction

The chronic poor experience severe deprivation(s) for extended periods of their lives or throughout the entire course of their lives. Commonly they are victims of inter-generational poverty, coming from poor households and producing offspring who grow up into poverty. In other cases, their persistent poverty is associated with some catastrophic and non-recoverable collapse in livelihood which may be idiosyncratic (e.g. prolonged illness of the head of household) or covariant (e.g. a region sliding into a complex political emergency). While much of the quantitative analysis views chronic poverty in terms of income poverty or consumption poverty we conceptualise it multi-dimensionally and include deprivations related to health, education, isolation, 'voice' and security (Hulme, Moore and Shepherd 2001).

Chronic poverty can be studied at a variety of inter-related levels: individual, household, socio-economic group or spatial region. In this paper we explore chronic poverty in spatial terms examining the evidence that individuals, households and groups located in remote rural regions² are more likely to experience chronic poverty. This focus on remote rural areas (RRAs) corresponds to a current trend in development studies where 'place' is once again becoming an important factor. Alternative development (Hettne, 1995) and postdevelopment thinkers (Dirlik, 1998, Escobar, 2001) have been critical of the absence of place in 'mainstream' and functional perspectives on development, which tend to focus on national- or even global-level aggregations. Our focus on RRAs is a recognition that *place matters*, that it shapes ones identity, life-chances and experiences.

We find that the limited evidence available provides support for the contention that instances of chronic poverty are likely to be higher in RRAs than in non-remote or urban areas. Subsequently we analyse the particular factors that underpin chronic poverty in remote rural areas and review what is known about policies intended to reduce such suffering.

Inevitably, this paper is of a tentative nature as most existing empirical and theoretical work treats the 'poor' as an undifferentiated category and only rarely do studies separate out the chronic and transient poor in rural areas (or indeed remote from less remote rural areas). It must also be noted that while many rural areas experience high levels of poverty there are often significant numbers of non-poor people in such areas and commonly small élites with high levels of wealth and well-being. To complicate things even further, it must be recognised that the dynamic processes resulting in improvements or declines in wellbeing, welfare decline and/or poverty reduction that operate in rural areas are closely linked to economic, social and political processes in urban areas. Many rural problems (and their solutions) have an urban dimension. This may be especially true in remote regions where large proportions of the population may commute or migrate to work, and where those who can, leave (semi-) permanently.

Before examining the data on poverty and chronic poverty in rural areas it is useful to sketch out a very brief 'history' of the 'rural' in development thinking so that the contemporary situation can be understood in an historical context.

² Philip Amis' *Urban chronic poverty* also has a spatial dimension, and is forthcoming as a Chronic Poverty research Centre Working Paper.

The history of rural development.

At the end of the colonial era the vast majority of the population of developing countries was resident in rural areas. Throughout the second half of the 20th Century there has been rapid rural to urban migration but still the majority of people in sub-Saharan African and Asian countries live in rural areas. There has been widespread rural to rural migration also and many areas that were previously sparsely populated (drylands, steep slopes, tsetse-infested areas, and moist tropical forests) have been heavily settled.

Much development thinking (correctly) predicted rapid urbanisation. However, it was often over-optimistic about the speed at which economic growth, job creation and demographic transition would occur. The rapid shift from an agrarian to an industrial economy that was anticipated has proved elusive (with the exception of East and Southeast Asia's 'tigers'). The nature of urbanisation has been different with minimal development of an urban hierarchy from large city to hamlet. In the 1950s and 1960s development policy for rural areas centred on agriculture: the state had to get agriculture 'moving' to feed rapidly growing populations and create the expanded reproduction to generate the capital that was needed for industrialisation. This focus on 'agricultural modernisation' allied to rapid industrialisation was challenged in the 1970s - most memorably by Robert McNamara, President of the World Bank - as concerns arose that 'trickle down' was not occurring and across (most of) the developing world the numbers of rural people living in poverty was rising at alarming rates.

An era of 'rural development' policy was ushered in by donor agencies: it promoted 'integrated rural development projects' (IRDPs) in which multi-sectoral (agriculture, infrastructure, health, education and sometimes institution building) investments were focused on clearly defined rural areas. The achievements of this 'full frontal attack' on rural poverty came in for criticism in the 1980s and prescriptions of laissez-faire structural adjustment displaced IRDPs underpinned by the theory that reduced state activity and economic liberalisation would allow rural areas (and their populations) to prosper as they built on their comparative advantage. Country and regional experiences varied enormously, however. While some countries took the SAP medicine, others signed up to the conditionalities but played cat and mouse with their implementation. The big players, India and China, adopted quite different strategies with the former only slowly and reluctantly liberalising while the latter opted for a unique brew of rapid economic liberalisation allied to political authoritarianism.

Throughout this period (1950 to 2000) a persistent analytical theme has been about the relative failure of the majority of rural people (and particularly the rural poor) to politically mobilise themselves in forms that can promote their economic and social interests. This has been interpreted as an 'urban bias' (Lipton 1977 and IFAD 2001) or as the subordination of peasant interests by rural capitalists (Byres 1981): whatever the analytical lens, there is clear evidence that the vast majority of rural people have lacked an effective political 'voice' in both authoritarian and democratic settings.

2 What do we know about poverty and chronic poverty in rural areas?

2.1 Rural Poverty and Urban Poverty.

Economic and socio-political links between rural and urban areas should not be underestimated. Despite widespread urban unemployment in Sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere, urban areas provide crucial employment opportunities for rural migrants (Bird et al, 2000; Kothari, 2002; Amis, 2002), which result in flows of remittances which are used to cope with contingencies and invest in a wide range of rural enterprises. Urban dwellers may also provide their rural extended family with seasonal loans and with a base from which rural produce can be sold (Bird et al, 2000). Urban centres, ranging from small trading centres to large regional cities and major conurbations clearly have an impact on their hinterlands through the provision of goods and services and the generation of markets for rural produce. Urban markets have been shown to have a significant impact on rural food security in semi-arid areas across Africa.

However, what particularly interests us here are the differences between rural and urban areas. In the vast majority of developing and transitional countries, rural poverty (whether measured by income/consumption data or other indicators) has been and remains at higher levels than in urban areas. An analysis of survey data for the 1980-1998 period assembled by IFAD (2001) reveals that in 94 per cent of 115 'poverty line' studies, rural poverty was recorded at higher levels than urban poverty (Table 1). For 65 per cent of cases the rural-urban poverty ratio was in excess of 1.5:1 (i.e. rural poverty levels were more than 50 per cent greater than urban levels). The ratios ranged up to 4.91 (Burkina Faso in 1994), 8.31 (Zimbabwe in 1991) and 28.7 (China in 1990). For the 17 per cent of the available surveys, concentrated on sub-Saharan Africa, East and Southeast Asia and Latin America, the incidence of rural poverty was on average three times greater than the urban figure (Table 1). Previous studies of rural-urban differences in poverty (IFAD 1992; Lipton and Ravallion 1995) have had similar findings.

While the complex dynamics of rural poverty rates and rural-urban rate differences make prediction difficult, projections such as Naylor and Franklin's (1995) indicate that the number of poor in rural areas will continue to exceed those in urban areas well into the 21st century, despite the dominant trend of urbanisation. IFAD supports this premise, stating in their 2001 Rural Poverty Report that '...over 70% of the world's poor are now rural, and over 60% is likely to be rural in 2025' (IFAD 2001: 18). Global climatic change and complex political emergencies, neither of which was factored into the IFAD analysis, are all likely to retard progress with rural poverty reduction.

The picture that emerges from surveys of social indicators and access to basic services confirms that rural populations experience higher levels of deprivation despite the general improvements in such indicators over the last 30 years. Using data recently assembled by IFAD (2000: 36-37) it is found that in 93 per cent of observations access to adequate sanitation is lower in rural areas than urban areas, in 97 per cent of observations access to safe drinking water and in 100 per cent of observations access to primary health care are also lower in rural areas (Table 2). The available data thus clearly confirm de Haan and Lipton's (1998) conclusion that rural-urban poverty trends in Asia '...show little signs of convergence' and Hanmer, Pyatt and White's (1997) finding that living in a rural area in Africa significantly increases the probability of being poor.

However, the situation is not static and the trends in rural poverty (1980-1999) reveal a complex pattern (Table 3). In a number of countries, particularly Ethiopia, Uganda, China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Sri Lanka, significant improvements have occurred and levels of income poverty have reduced while social indicators have improved. By contrast, in a number of areas rural poverty has deepened. While the IFAD study (2001: 39 and 46-59) identifies a relatively small number of examples (Zimbabwe, Dominican Republic, Algeria, Kyrgyz Republic and Romania) because of a lack of data availability it does not cover a significant number of countries presently experiencing violent conflicts. For many such countries – Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Somalia and Sudan – anecdotal evidence would suggest that rural poverty has deepened over the last 10 to 20 years.

Another group of countries – Burkina Faso, Kenya, Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Philippines and Peru – appear to have stalled in their recent efforts to tackle rural poverty. Most alarmingly, in terms of the hundreds of millions of rural people it encompasses, India is judged to be ‘running out of steam’ (ibid.: 39) following its earlier success in reducing rural poverty.

Table 1: Rural-Urban Differences in Poverty: a Summary of Survey Findings (1980-1998)¹

Rural-Urban Poverty Ratio	Number of Poverty Studies (% of total number of poverty studies)							Total
	West & Central Africa	East & Southern Africa	South Asia	East & Southeast Asia	Latin America & Caribbean	North Africa & Near East	Eastern Europe & FSU	
<1.0 ²	1(6)	0(0)	0(0)	3(12)	2(9)	0(0)	1(14)	7(6)
>1.0	17(94)	15(100)	21(100)	21(87)	21(91)	7(100)	6(86)	108(94)
>1.5	10(56)	14(93)	8(38)	16(67)	17(74)	6(86)	4(57)	75(65)
>2.0	6(33)	7(47)	1(5)	12(50)	11(48)	5(71)	3(43)	45(39)
>3.0	4(22)	3(20)	0(0)	6(25)	5(22)	0(0)	1(14)	19(17)
Total	18(100)	15(100)	21(100)	24(100)	23(100)	7(100)	7(100)	115(100)

Source: Computed from IFAD (2001: 42-45). For original survey sources see notes to the IFAD dataset.

1 Four surveys were pre-1980.

2 These 'exceptional cases', where urban poverty rates exceed rural poverty rates, are Cameroon (1984), Indonesia (1987 and 1990), Mongolia (1994), Honduras (1993) and Georgia (1997).

Table 2: Rural-Urban Differences in Social Indicators: a Summary of Recent Findings

	Percentage of Studies Finding Rural Levels are Below Urban Levels¹ (sample size)						
Social Indicator	West & Central Africa	East & Southern Africa	South Asia	East & Southeast Asia	Latin America & Caribbean	North Africa & Near East	Average for all regions covered
Adequate Sanitation	100(8)	86(7)	100(5)	100(6)	83(12)	100(3)	93(41)
Safe Drinking Water	88(8)	100(3)	100(3)	100(5)	100(14)	100(2)	97(35)
Access to Primary Health Care	100(7)	100(3)	100(1)	100(4)	100(10)	100(3)	100(28)
Literacy	N/A	N/A	100(5)	100(3)	100(4)	100(3)	100(15)

Source: Computed from IFAD (2001: 36-37)

¹ Studies in which rural and urban cases are shown to be level are omitted. There were only 4 such cases in 123 reports.

Table 3: Rural Poverty Trends in Selected Countries (1980-99)*

	Western & Central Africa	Eastern & Southern Africa	Asia and the Pacific	Latin America & Caribbean	Middle & East Africa	Eastern Europe & Former Soviet Union
Increase		Zimbabwe		Dominican Republic	Algeria	Kyrgyz Republic Romania
No appreciable decline	Burkina Faso	Kenya	Bangladesh Cambodia Philippines	Peru		
Decline but still high	Mauritania	Zambia	Pakistan	Colombia Ecuador Guatemala Honduras		
Initial decline but running out of steam			India			
Appreciable decline		Ethiopia Uganda	China Indonesia Malaysia Sri Lanka		Morocco Tunisia	
No clear trend	Nigeria					

Source: IFAD, 2001

* This is the broad period for which data is available. For individual countries, the period may vary.

2.2 Transient and Chronic Poverty in Rural Areas

Research on vulnerability over the last two decades has fostered the understanding of transient poverty in rural areas (see Chambers 1983 for an early review). However, only recently has work been conducted on determining the proportion of the poor consisting of 'always poor' (see Baulch and Hoddinott 1999 and CPRC Working Papers <http://www.chronicpoverty.org>). Initial findings have to be treated with caution because of differences in national poverty lines, different time intervals between panels and specificities of sample selection. In the studies that IFAD (2001) has reviewed, at one extreme is the surprisingly 'low' finding for rural Pakistan that only 3 per cent of households were below the poverty line in all five years of a 1986-91 panel study. At the other is a study that found 54 per cent of households in a disadvantaged area of rural Chile to be 'always poor' over the period 1967/8 to 1985/6. Figures for Côte d'Ivoire (1987-88), Ethiopia (1994-95), South Africa (1993-98) and India (1975/76-1983/4) cluster around the 22 to 25 per cent level. A number of micro-level studies also suggest the presence and growth of chronic poverty in specific localities – for example, Whitehead (1996) found that in a village in Northeast Ghana '...the number of destitute households has nearly doubled' between 1975 and 1989³.

While the understanding of chronic poverty in general terms is very partial there is a much larger body of evidence indicating that concentrations of chronic poverty occur in specific geographical areas. This is discussed in the following sub-section, and in detail in Section 3.

Information gathered in CPRC inception phase country papers indicates both that a significant proportion of the rural poor are chronically poor, and that there is only the beginnings of an understanding of the chronic poor and the processes surrounding the persistence of poverty.

In Sen's (2001) Bangladesh paper, he cites a panel of about 1,200 rural households that showed that approximately 38% of households stayed in poverty during the period 1990-4, with a similar proportion observed for the period 1987-90. The key causes of downward mobility were crisis factors (e.g. natural disasters, health-hazards, isolated 'idiosyncratic' events) in 35% of cases; lifecycle factors (e.g. increase in the number of dependants or a split in the family) in 28% of cases; and structural factors (e.g. declining employment opportunities, lack of access to credit or rising inflation) in the remaining 37%.

Mehta and Shah's (2001) Indian paper cites Gaiha (1989), who used data from a large panel survey of rural households in 1968-71. According to Gaiha's analysis, about 47% of the income poor in 1968 were chronically poor. At the same time, he suggests that the chronically poor were not necessarily the poorest, and the poorest were not necessarily chronically poor.

The latter point is supported by work based on the KwaZulu-Natal Income Dynamics Survey 1993-98 (KIDS, 1998), cited by Aliber (2001) in his South Africa paper. Aliber presents KIDS data that indicates that 86.9% of all chronically poor households in KwaZulu-Natal are from rural areas, while 30% of rural African⁴ households are chronically poor. A wealth of information surrounding the correlates of chronic poverty is presented. Importantly, in the

³ This is not necessarily itself an indicator of chronic poverty, but of the severity of poverty, unless many of these households had been poor for much of, or throughout, this period.

⁴ Meaning Black African, differentiated from 'Indian', 'Coloured' or 'White' Africans.

South African context unemployment is a highly significant correlate of chronic poverty, and unemployment is much more likely among rural Africans (51.4%) than urban Africans (43.3%) - an international anomaly based in part on the lack of access to agricultural land to Africans. Of course, unemployment rates are far lower among the white community (rural - 7.4%; urban - 8.6%) and the coloured community (rural - 17.0%; urban - 29.1%).

Okidi and Kempaka (2001) analyse a Uganda National Household Survey panel of 818 households surveyed in both 1992 and 1996. The data shows that 31.4% of rural households were chronically poor over this period (while the headcount ratio declined from 51.6% to 47.9%), compared to 12.4% of urban households (while the headcount ratio declined from 32.0% to 22.0%). 61% of the urban households that were poor in 1992 had moved out of poverty by 1996, while only 39% of rural households that were poor in 1992 moved were out of poverty over the same period.

2.3 'Backward Regions'⁵ and Islands of Poverty

Historically, analysts and practitioners of development have long been concerned with a subset of rural areas where poverty is particularly intense and where the prospects for economic growth and human development are bleak. This concern has continued through to the contemporary literature and featured in WDR 2000/1's findings that geographical 'poverty traps' exist and may be deepening (World Bank 2000: 124) and the Rural Poverty Report (IFAD 2001: 21) '...generally, the poorest of the poor live in remote rural areas'. For Asia, de Haan and Lipton (1998: 21) argue that '...for all its huge gains in poverty reduction, [it] is in danger of leaving behind a core of regions less affected by growth or less able to translate it into rapid progress for the poor. The poor in such regions are... badly placed either to seize local prospects or to migrate to distant ones'. These areas differ, but tropical, landlocked, and remote areas were found to increase the likelihood of poverty in an area in 1950. These geographical characteristics adversely affected growth between 1950 and 1995 (Gallup et al, 1998:198). Such areas include India's East-Central 'poverty square', much of the North and West of China and Northeast Thailand, where 'hardcore poverty' - especially among the uneducated - is concentrated (ibid.: 1 and 3). A detailed study of Bangladesh identified such islands of poverty: '...we find significant and sizeable geographic effects on living standards after controlling for a wide range of non-geographic characteristics' (Ravallion and Wodon 1999) while in the Philippines poverty in upland areas is at significantly higher levels than in lowland areas (IFAD 2001: 164).

Remoteness is also a key factor in explaining concentrations of poverty in Africa as it limits access to markets, increases the price of inputs and makes both economic and social services less accessible. 'One study in Tanzania has estimated that households within 100 metres of a gravel road, passable 12 months a year with a bus service, earn about one-third more per capita than the (rural) average' (ibid). There are similar findings from Nigeria (Porter 1997). Research by the UNDP provides evidence of spatial poverty traps in Africa's 'marginal lands (which) include drylands, swamps, saline lands and steep slopes... the areas are often isolated,

⁵ 'Backwardness' is a term often used by policy makers and other urban élites, particularly in South Asia (i.e. Other Backward Classes in India), to describe certain regions or groups of people who seem to remain 'traditional' or even 'regress' in the face of 'progressive modernity'. While recognising its problematic nature, we use this term to flag up the manner in which entire regions and vulnerable groups have been excluded from development processes.

unreached by well-developed physical and socio-economic infrastructure' (UNDP 1997: 68-9). They found clear evidence of agro-ecological factors influencing the intensity of poverty: '...the highest incidence of poverty occurs in arid zones. A recent study of 10 Sahelian countries showed human poverty worsening from wetter to drier zones: the HPI (human poverty index) is only 26 per cent in humid zones but soars to 61 per cent in arid zones' (ibid.).

A common feature of many such 'backward regions' is that considerable portions of them are reserved for conservation as 'protected areas' (PAs). This is particularly the case in sub-Saharan Africa where many countries have 10 to 20 per cent of their land protected (e.g. 16 per cent of Tanzania is protected). Most PAs are in areas remote from urban centres and transport infrastructure. Historically, conservation has imposed high costs on the populations adjacent to PAs. These include loss of access to natural resources, crop loss to wild animals, harassment by 'national park' rangers and dysfunctional transport and communications systems (see Hulme and Murphree 2001 for examples). While such regions are acclaimed for their biodiversity by middle-class environmentalists, those who live in them are made poorer by 'conservation' and seem likely to remain that way (ibid.).

Remote rural areas also often share a history, and their development (or underdevelopment) can be seen as 'path dependent' – essentially formed and constrained by history. These histories are linked to colonial and post-colonial elite interpretations of the role and function of RRAs. In some countries they were seen as labour supply regions ('labour reserves' in colonial jargon); in others they were 'closed districts', areas of cultural difference where rulers wished to exclude mainstream influences. More recently, they have also become areas where the unregulated economy thrives beyond the eye of effective bureaucracy, and even areas from which violent political movements rebuild their resources.

We must pose the question as to whether these problems result in concentrations of poverty or whether they correlate with high levels of *chronic* poverty. This will require future research but there is a strong theoretical case that 'logjams of disadvantage' (de Haan and Lipton 1998) create concentrations of poor people who cannot escape poverty in such areas (see Section 4, below).

The evidence that vulnerability in rural areas is higher than urban areas, that risk covariance makes it harder to cope with and that in remote and marginal areas vulnerability is well above 'average' rural levels further raises the probability of high levels of chronic poverty in remote rural areas (see later).

2.4 Mapping rural poverty

A number of efforts are underway to map various indicators of poverty (both income, food security, and human development) which allow overlays with indicators of accessibility, agro-ecological characteristics (e.g. aridity), conflict zones, and population density. Initial findings are summarised in an excellent paper by Henninger (1998). A large part of the findings refer to West Africa, which has benefited from much of the poverty mapping work to date.

‘The West Africa Long Term Perspective Study (WALTPS) demonstrated a strong correlation between population density, per capita agricultural production, and potential market integration, defined as the virtual price offered by the market for a standard basket of products (Ninnin 1994). WALTPS assumed that the higher the virtual price, the greater the incentive to produce, on a sustained basis, an agricultural surplus and the greater the earning opportunities.....other factors than access...limit market integration such as farmers’ capacity to sustain high outputs over the long-term’ (35).

Measures of vulnerability indicated by Famine Early Warning Systems (income, resource and current vulnerability) and accessibility indicate striking differences across West Africa. Parts of central Mali, central Niger, and central Chad are vulnerable on all three indicators. A strong negative correlation between economic diversity and vulnerability is quite likely. Child mortality and accessibility were found to be strongly spatially associated.

Maps of Uganda indicate strong associations between remoteness and conflict/insecurity, drought/flood affected areas. Areas of low food stocks are pastoral (conflict prone with poor pasture conditions) and remote (in Eastern Uganda).

Nutrition indicators appear strongly correlated with aridity zones (ibid.: 55). Stunting appears not to be correlated with the vulnerability indicators – but this may be a product of population densities or other factors.

To sum up, there is clear evidence of the existence of ‘hardcore poverty’ in ‘spatial poverty traps’ in rural areas in the developing world and good grounds for believing that contemporary development processes will ensure that such concentrations of human deprivation will persist and deepen in coming decades (de Haan and Lipton 1998; Jalan and Ravallion 1997; World Bank 2000: 124; IFAD 2001). There are large regions in arid, semi-arid and remote Africa, the ‘poverty square’ of East-Central India, infrastructurally isolated and tribal parts of Bangladesh, mountainous areas of the Himalayan/Karakoram Hindu-Kush range, the Andes, and North and Western China. There are smaller regions and pockets elsewhere. Almost 1.8 billion people live ‘in less favoured areas including marginal agricultural, forest and woodland, and arid areas’ (Pender and Hazell, 2000).

2.5 A typology of remote rural areas (RRAs)

Intuitively, remote rural areas likely to be characterised by chronic poverty *on an area basis* where resources are limited, and they can be broken down as follows:

- Areas with ‘extreme’ ecologies where infrastructure and communication is limited and difficult: mountains, swamps, deserts, islands, *chars*⁶ ...
- Low-potential areas: semi-arid, limited topsoil, water resources; and/or degraded: polluted, saline, landmines
- Poverty ‘pockets’ where social-political exclusion – on the basis of language, identity (caste, religion, tribe, ethnicity, class), gender maintain significant proportions of the population in poverty

⁶ Temporary islands revealed by receding floods in Bangladesh

- Areas experiencing long-term conflict, where the dynamic of conflict itself has led to widespread damage to the resource base as well as people's capabilities.

Clearly not all mountain areas have been chronically poor since 1950, however; areas affected by conflict have experienced reconstruction and revival. So there is a need for a more sophisticated approach to the classification of RRAs. An approach which can be applied in country studies is suggested below. This begins to link the causes of chronic poverty in RRAs (Section 3) with the descriptive outcomes as listed above (see Table 4, below).

3 Why are those who live in remote rural areas more likely to experience chronic poverty?

Having established the existence of spatial poverty traps in rural areas, and the likelihood of concentrations of chronic poverty in such areas, we now ask 'why' this occurs. At the outset it must be recognised that this is a complex phenomenon and that differing sets of factors underpin concentrations of persistent poverty between regions and within regions. While geographical remoteness (i.e. physical distance from major cities or the coast), geographical isolation (i.e. difficulty of access because of topography) and physical constraints on agricultural productivity are common to many areas, a simplistic geographical determinism must be avoided. Interlocking sets of economic, social and political factors shape patterns of poverty traps. 'Market failures' lead to under-investment in such regions and the extraction of resources without any corresponding benefits in terms of pro-poor growth. 'State failure' means that infrastructure, an 'enabling environment', basic services (particularly health and education) and social protection are inadequate in many remote rural areas. This may have a sub-national dimension (e.g. the failure of a provincial government to operate effectively), a national dimension (e.g. public policy weaknesses) and an international dimension (e.g. inadequacies in the responses of neighbouring countries and/ or international development or security agencies). And, 'social failure', between and within social groups, leads to social exclusion and discrimination, breakdowns in security and political stability and increasing social and economic inequality.

Table 4: Remoteness and chronic poverty: a basis for a typology, with examples⁷

Type of remoteness	Degree of remoteness influenced by		
	<i>Access to education, health services, cash income</i>	<i>Social-political exclusion – language, identity (caste, religion, tribe, ethnicity, class), gender</i>	<i>Security/insecurity – conflict, crime, domestic/sexual violence</i>
<i>Distance and/or frictional distance from</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>urban centres</i> • <i>coast</i> • <i>communication links:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>travel or shipment by road, rail, water etc.)</i> - <i>ICTs⁸</i> - <i>Media</i> • <i>Political institutions</i> 	Areas characterised by few or less developed physical markets, limited opportunities for sale of labour, commodities, limited access to and demand for information, services and political institutions	Areas characterised by few or less developed physical markets, limited opportunities for sale of labour, commodities, inhabited by excluded groups with little opportunity to change the critical aspects of remoteness	Areas characterised by few or less developed physical markets, limited opportunities for sale of labour, commodities, with saving and private and public investment constrained by violence and insecurity
<i>Ecology</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>extreme physical barriers</i> • <i>moderate barriers</i> • <i>no physical barriers</i> 	Failure of basic services of minimal quality to reach a large proportion of the population	Absence of social and political basis to challenge the inequitable distribution of services and infrastructure	Inadequate extension of national security across physical barriers; peripheral areas of disintegrated nation-state

In the sections that follow we identify the most commonly cited ‘causes’ of chronic poverty in remote rural areas in the literature. Populations in RRAs are characterised by:

- higher dependency ratios due to high fertility, mortality of people of working age, and out-migration
- exposure to higher levels of risk, and lower levels of social protection
- poor agro-ecology
- food insecurity
- poor policy and low levels of service delivery
- constraining social factors

⁷ A simpler version of this was produced by Pender and Hazell (2000), producing a matrix combining access to infrastructure and markets, agricultural potential, and socio-economic or bio-physical constraints.

⁸ ICTs = information and communication technologies.

Future CPRC (Chronic Poverty Research Centre) research must move beyond generalisations to detail how different *sets* of causal factors contribute to chronic poverty (at individual, household, social group or geographical unit level) in specific developing countries. This section introduces the multiple constraints faced in rural areas, ranging from poorly functioning markets to increased likelihood of violent conflict, and proceeds on to Section 4, which introduces and evaluates three conceptual frameworks – geographic capital, social exclusion and governance - which promise to help us attribute the causes of chronic poverty.

3.1 Human capital in remote rural areas: demography, health, impairment and disability

Demographic factors are likely to provide a partial explanation of why poverty is more widespread in rural areas and help us understand the dynamics of chronic poverty. There is substantial evidence from Asia that in rural areas ‘...poor households tend to be significantly larger than others ... and to have higher dependency ratios’ (de Haan and Lipton 1998), although this finding has not gone unchallenged (Lanjouw and Ravallion 1995). For Kenya, Njiro (1998) has argued that in mountainous areas ‘...out-migration further weakens such areas, leaving the old, the women and the disabled’, so that even where households are small the dependency ratios are high⁹.

In our future research we shall need to explore the role of dependency ratios in quantitative and qualitative terms. It can be postulated that dependency ratios will be higher in remote rural regions because:

- fertility rates are higher because of lower levels of access to family planning services and a complex of economic, social and cultural factors. This ‘complex’ needs deconstruction – are RRAs at an early stage in the classic fertility transition, based on the interaction between poor health care services and high death rates (especially IMRs) on the one hand, and labour intensive, usually land-based, survival strategies on the other?
- out-migration draws those of working age (and those with socially constructed higher values in the labour market) disproportionately away from such areas
- the lower quality of ‘impairment prevention’ (see later) services in remote areas generates higher levels of disability.

While higher dependency ratios are likely to be associated with present poverty (at least in theory) it is also probable that they contribute to the inter-generational transmission of poverty (chronic to chronic or transient to chronic) because of the impact of poorer access to health and education on ‘child quality’ and long term human development.

⁹ Discussions of high ‘dependency ratios’ in RRAs, and the ‘residual populations’ left in RRAs when others migrate does not detract from the contribution made by women, children, the aged and the physically and mentally impaired. However, in many areas, the lack of a male head of household leaves families excluded from key decision-making for a. Widow and child-headed households may also lack access to crucial productive resources, and certain labour-intensive activities may be more difficult to complete without access to a certain number of youthful and able-bodied workers. This constraint becomes particularly difficult where culturally determined labour market rigidities preclude women and men from participating in certain activities e.g. women rarely go to market to sell or purchase goods and services in Bangladesh.

Our research will need to go beyond the linear analysis of household size and chronic poverty to examine the way in which specific household structures and variables (fertility, migration, family breakdown) are associated with chronic poverty. It may well be that ‘larger households’ (with high numbers of children), ‘female headed households’ (experiencing deeper levels of social exclusion and possibly low access to land, credit and productive assets) and ‘smaller households’ (older couples, widows by themselves, lone mothers with a disabled child, young couples with smaller numbers of younger children who have not accumulated assets) all have a propensity to chronic poverty.

IFAD (2001: 30ff) believes that a ‘demographic revolution’ is underway in rural areas, creating a one-off ‘window of opportunity’ for rural poverty reduction. ‘This fertility transition also alters the dynamics of chronic poverty by inducing large rises in the proportion of people who are of working age’ (ibid.). However, as the IFAD Report observes, the rural and the poor are likely to be the last to experience the conditions that favour fertility reduction. Identifying policies that facilitate fertility reduction could be of importance for tackling chronic poverty, according to this argument.

There is clear evidence that rural areas have lower levels of access to primary health services, potable water and sanitation (Table 2 and UNDP 1994: 148-9, World Bank, 1994) and there is much evidence of higher levels of morbidity and mortality. Widespread anecdotal evidence indicates that the more geographically remote and economically marginal a rural area is then the stronger the probability that health services will not only be below national averages but also below rural averages. Given that ‘(d)isability in developing countries stems largely from preventable impairments associated with communicable, maternal and perinatal disease and injuries’ then higher levels of disability, and thus chronic poverty, can be expected in remote rural areas. Such processes are likely to keep those presently in poverty poor in the future and to ‘...hit people in early childhood’ who are experiencing transient poverty (de Haan and Lipton 1998) in ways that may make their poverty a permanent characteristic.

We are proposing that remote rural areas contain ‘residual’ populations: where dependency is high, human capital is diminished and assets are extremely vulnerable.

3.2 Risk in Remote Rural Areas

There are numerous sources of risk in rural areas which make households more likely to suffer shocks and experience an erosion of assets, deepening their vulnerability to future shocks and damaging their ability to escape poverty. Because of the covariant nature of many risks in rural areas poor households are exposed to inter-linked shocks, which can deepen and prolong their poverty. We suggest that risks are more pronounced in remote rural areas than in non-remote rural areas. However, panel data from the Jalan-Ravallion studies of South West China show limited risk-poverty linkages (Morduch 1999: 1). This suggests that we need to take care to avoid generalised statements, and highlights the need for findings to be well grounded in the analysis of panel and other data sets.

Risks result from the inherent characteristics of remote rural areas. Sinha and Lipton (1999) list the six key ‘damaging fluctuations’ (DFs), or sources of risk, as being: disease or injury,

violence, natural disaster¹⁰, harvest failure, terms-of-trade deterioration and reduced access to productive or income-earning work. They suggest that remote rural areas have greater vulnerability to natural disasters than non-remote areas; this vulnerability exists both due to the marginality of land, as well as the greater difficulty of, and governmental lack of interest in, providing rescue and rehabilitation. Major conurbations are commonly located in favourable topographical and agro-ecological areas. Conversely remote rural areas are, by their nature, not favourable locations and tend to be more highly exposed to climatic and other risks.

Risk of Conflict.

It will be argued below that remote rural areas are more prone to violent conflict than other areas. Households in conflict areas are exposed to risks not only of death or injury but also of entitlement decline through production losses, as a result of the interruption of cultivation or enterprise or collapse of public services.

Risk of Rain Failure.

Households in arid and semi-arid areas suffer from the impact of rain failure and from the damaging impacts of risk adverse decision-making and patterns of investment. Scoones (1992) shows that the impact of rain failure on livestock keepers depends on an interaction of ecological and socio-economic factors. Others (Prakash 1997) suggest that the altered discount rates (short time horizons) of severely poor households in mountains and uplands results in a mining of environmental goods. The resulting environmental damage is likely to intensify the household's vulnerability while simultaneously increasing the risks that they face. This is likely to draw households down into chronic poverty. This can affect large numbers of people. Despite their low potential, such areas are often densely populated due to historical planning decisions and population movements, and some areas have population densities exceeding 25 persons per square kilometre. Ellis (in Behnke and Kerven 1994: 1) estimates that there are around 30 million livestock dependent people living in semi-arid Africa alone, and the numbers increases vastly if we include sedentary communities.

Risk of Market Failure.

But rain failure is not the only shock affecting RRAs. Market failure is likely to be pronounced. This will result in the under-provision of goods and services as a result of poor transport links; frictional distance (distance expressed as journey time) and under investment by both the public sector (due to political marginalisation) and the private sector (due in part to stigmatisation). As a result households are less likely to be able to access formal insurance services or income smoothing credit, and their vulnerability to risk may be pronounced. Jalan and Ravallion (1999) found that the impact of an income shock on current consumption was far more pronounced for the poorest wealth decile in rural China. 40 per cent of the decline was transmitted to consumption as opposed to only 10 per cent amongst the richest third.

¹⁰ While urban areas can be prone to natural disasters (e.g. floods in Dhaka, Bangladesh; volcanic eruptions in Goma, DRC) the Famine Early Warning Systems (FEWS) of FAO (FEWS/ GIEWS) show that food security due to harvest failures are most pronounced in rural areas (www.fao.org). Where floods, earthquakes and other disasters occur in rural areas, their distance from state emergency responses can make populations more vulnerable.

Responses to Risk.

Successive exogenous or endogenous shocks are likely to force households into coping resulting in the progressive erosion of household assets (Corbett 1988). However, risk aversion will also have a profound impact on households' ability to exit poverty with farm households, for instance, choosing to remain in capital extensive, low return modes of production. Other negative impacts can result from the absence of insurance mechanisms leading to a high degree of dependence on traditional safety net mechanisms (Morduch 1999: 2). Reciprocal transfers result in income spreading over time and space and may prevent individual households accumulating assets for reinvestment. Although this lessens differentiation, it may also dampen potential economic growth, limiting geographic capital formation. As we saw above, low levels of geographical capital reduces the returns on individual investments. In addition, the absence of pension schemes may lead to higher fertility rates than would otherwise occur (ibid.), with negative implications including damage to female health and high dependency ratios during the youthful phase of the household's lifecycle. These relationships are likely to be evident in non-remote areas, but the risky character of RRAs is likely to reinforce the negative nature of these relationships.

So, risk in remote rural areas may not only degrade household assets and impoverish the most vulnerable, this process may have negative externalities and, where the density of poor households is high, prevent neighbouring households climbing out of poverty.

Box 1: Chronic and acute food insecurity in remote rural areas.

Some remote rural areas are known for their acute, usually temporary food insecurity. Famine-prone and remoteness are somewhat linked.

Chronic food insecurity is an outcome of the combination of risks and responses to risk described in the text. Globally poverty reduction has slowed since 1990, with the likely result that protein-energy malnutrition will grow. It has already increased in Sub-Saharan Africa since 1980, and in urban areas, and among older people. Whether it will grow particularly in remote or less favoured areas will depend on the poverty trends in those areas, the degree to which women in RRAs are malnourished (partly a result of mineral deficiencies, but also low birth weight in the previous generation) and the degree to which beliefs about children's diets run counter to sound child nutrition. The latter is linked to education, and particularly women's education. It is likely that less favoured areas have done less well in terms of the health and education programmes which provide the knowledge which drives change on these issues.

See Shepherd and Kyegombe (forthcoming, 2002).

3.3 Distance from markets

One of the reasons that RRAs are characterised by higher levels of risk is the distance people or goods have to travel to access markets and services. There is an assumption in much current development policy that the provision of communications infrastructure will lead to market development. Certainly this can reduce the 'frictional distance' (distance x time) experienced so strongly by remote area populations (if networks are appropriately designed

and maintained and if supported by complementary investments in bus and other transport services).

However, markets are institutions, with actors constrained by incentive systems. The incentives to trade in remote areas are affected by many different considerations: security, governance, population density, disposable incomes, availability of trading (working) capital, traders' willingness to settle in an area and so on. This means that investments in infrastructure may or may not improve access to markets. They are more likely to facilitate access to labour markets and secondary and tertiary services first, before having a substantial effect on commodity markets.

3.4 Poor Agro-ecology

Another stated reason behind high levels of risk in RRAs is the quality of the physical environment. This is quite a confusing topic. Remote rural areas' populations are often blamed for over-exploitation of delicate ecologies and are often subject to draconian conservation efforts and their attendant exclusionary effects. More recently, as the natural resource management capabilities of local populations have been appreciated, there have been numerous efforts to include them in public sector wildlife and forest conservation schemes. There are untapped potentials in bio-diversity conservation (Shepherd 1998). Some of these have definitely made a positive difference, but they have not always provided substantial benefits. Typically the status quo of property rights is retained, which continues to disadvantage local populations.

Remote areas with poor environments are not immutably so. The experience of Machakos in Kenya (Tiffen et al. 1993) illustrates the point. Here was a relatively remote area in the 1930s, where the local population was seen as degrading the environment. By the 1990s the environment was visibly improved due to much higher levels of population density and investment in land and water management and forestry by both the local people and the state in response to enhanced market opportunities. It is notable that good communication with Nairobi was a critical factor in this process.

3.5 Poor Policy and Low Levels of Service Delivery

The argument here would be that the focus of government, donors, and NGOs – the development industry – has been on the wrong policy areas. There is an old debate about whether resources should be invested in higher potential areas or in low potential areas where the poor often are. The (often exclusive) approach in practice has been to try to extend the successes of development in non-remote areas to RRA. The fact that so many RRA remain *so* undeveloped today is testimony to widespread failure of this policy. In short, the policy package has been 'rural development' – a strong emphasis on agriculture and natural resources, developing the non-farm economy, infrastructure and market development (usually less of the latter – which, it is assumed, will be taken care of by the private sector). This has worked well enough in areas with reasonable prospects for access to product and other markets since that is what the strategy hinges on. Where access is difficult, where there are strong 'comparative disadvantages' it is unlikely to 'work'. Where the quality of access to markets can be substantially improved, this can change the prospects for an area. However,

even then, it may take multiple investments over a sustained period to produce a reasonably competitive playing field¹¹.

Even middle income countries struggle with producing services and infrastructure for remote areas. Construction of physical infrastructure in many remote areas, especially mountainous areas and remote islands, is often not only less politically desirable for central governments, but can also be technically very difficult. For instance, while it is one of only two South Asian countries to be classified as a medium human development country, the Maldives has struggled to develop an adequate health infrastructure on enough of its 200 inhabited islands (of a total of nearly 1200, organised into 19 administrative atolls) to improve its basic health indicators. A lack of drinking water, transport and other services continues to plague many of the islands. As noted by the UNDP, "the extreme dispersal of population and the distances separating the islands give rise to severe diseconomies of scale in production and transport and in the provision of social and physical infrastructure" (UNDP 1997).

Prior to the widespread onset of structural adjustment programmes, policy for remote areas was often seen as a central aspect of rural development. Rural development ministries and agencies often had particular responsibility for remote areas, and integrated rural development programmes were often the chosen instrument of policy. In recent years, rural development has fallen out of favour due to perceived failures (especially of 'integrated rural development'¹²), a loss of vision or intellectual momentum, despite (or because of?) the extensive revision of approaches and methods towards the participatory and learning process, and the perception that agriculture and much of the classic rural development agenda should be left to the 'private sector'. There is the potential for a revival (Shepherd 1998), but this has not yet been realised.

IRDPs, some of which still continue to this day, are likely to contain particularly resonant lessons for this research as so many of them were located in remote and resource poor rural areas – indeed they were the world's previous most significant public policy response to the problems of such areas. It is expected that there will be positive medium-long term outcomes as well as the well documented negative lessons.

3.6 Constraining Social Factors

The inhabitants of remote areas are often looked on with fear, anxiety, or scorn by 'mainstream' society. Stereotypes, labels and stigma abound, based on race (e.g. aboriginal status), ethnicity, language, religion, culture and habits. As migrants they may suffer discrimination in labour, housing, credit and other markets. They may be blamed for crime and political unrest. They may be poorly connected to political élites, and therefore weakly protected.

Where such people achieve a degree of political power, systems of positive discrimination have had some beneficial, but often substantial negative results. They tend to reinforce the stereotypes while delivering benefits to individuals as opposed to the whole group. This issue

¹¹ There tend to be systematic differences in the functioning of markets (access to international markets and to local urban markets) in West Africa between coastal areas and inland savannah.

¹² Interestingly, some governments and donors have persisted with and modified this approach, based on lessons of experience, while others have abandoned it.

will be of particular relevance in India, where RRAs have long experienced the special policies and programmes for scheduled tribes and castes¹³. Other countries with long histories of positive discrimination for indigenous people (e.g. Botswana) may offer both positive and negative lessons¹⁴.

Social dimensions of remoteness are discussed further under the heading of social exclusion, in Section 4.

3.7 Violent Conflict

Violent conflict often affects remote areas, border areas, even if it does not originate there. Fighters often retreat to and have their bases in RRAs. People displaced over borders often resettle in remote areas, and find great difficulty rebuilding the threads of their livelihoods. People displaced within countries may run away to remote areas to hide.

Collier and Hoeffler (2001), in their econometric analysis of the causes of 78 civil wars during 1960-99, suggest three results with high relevance to discovering links between remote areas and conflict. First, primary commodity dependence increases the risk of conflict. Targeting of production or transportation of primary commodities by rebel forces usually strikes rural areas. Second, risk of conflict is increased by population dispersion. Third, it may also be increased by mountainous terrain.

Goodhand (2000) articulates a convincing hypothesis concerning remoteness, marginality, governance and conflict (see Box 2, below)

Box 2: Remoteness, Marginality, Governance and Conflict.

A weak state presence, the remote political status of certain groups and a lack of access to markets are likely to increase vulnerability and in certain contexts generate grievance. In Sri Lanka, for instance one of the key factors distinguishing the chronically poor from the transiently poor is the lack of access to state services. The remote rural areas in the deep South provided the main support for the violent JVP uprising in the late 1980s.

Many of today's conflicts emanate from and are fought out in border regions that have historically suffered from marginality, limited voice and hard core poverty. Conflicts in Nepal, and Chiapas, Mexico¹⁵ are clearly linked to differential development and patterns of exclusion. Such border regions may have historically had an ambiguous relationship with the state and been a magnet for potential dissidents. Conflict entrepreneurs have been able to mobilise around a discourse of grievance. Moreover the weak presence of the state in such areas has made it easier for militant groups to mobilise and establish base areas for their activities.

Source: Goodhand (2001: 14 and 50),

¹³ In India certain caste and tribal groups are 'scheduled', or listed, as being likely to experience discrimination. There are various policies and programmes which aim to provide positive discrimination. These range from reserving places at universities for people from scheduled castes or scheduled tribes, to reserving government posts.

¹⁴ Good (1999) states that the San in Botswana have been structurally underdeveloped and excluded. Positive discrimination in this context can be regarded as palliative, rather than dealing with the structural causes of inequality.

¹⁵ Sierra Leone and Liberia have had similar experiences.

Conflict and Natural Resource Scarcities.

Homer-Dixon (1999) argues the existence of a causal relationship between environmental scarcity and violence - particularly ethnic clashes and civil strife. He also suggests that environmental degradation, rural-urban migration, and urban unrest are linked in several contexts including the Indian one; this certainly has particular implications for both migrants from RRAs, and those left behind.

While his arguments do not touch specifically on the particular issues of remote areas, it can be hypothesised that RRAs are particularly susceptible to scarcity-linked conflict: it is often remote areas in which resources are most *physically* susceptible to degradation, and in which the population is the most *socially* vulnerable, to both resource capture and pressure to move into more marginal areas.

In addition, pressure over resources leads to increased attention to political decision-making, as access to land and other natural resources become critical to livelihoods. There may be conflicts between different livelihood groups over the control of resources. Absentee owners of land and cattle may compete with local user groups. Violent conflict is likely to emerge as local users confront powerful outside elite groups linked to the state, and/or local elites try to mobilise resistance.

Conflict and Natural Resource Wealth.

Precious resources (oil, diamonds, drugs) are playing a growing role in conflicts: many of these are in remote areas (e.g. Afghanistan, Northern Thailand, Liberia, Colombia, Congo) which become the stage for military action.

Manipulation of RRA populations by elites.

Co-optation and exclusion remain the principles of the prevailing political systems in SSA regardless of ideological orientation. Inequality and poverty are often perceived as 'the blatant and conscious result of purposeful policies of exclusion and discrimination initiated by the incumbent power elite of a particular ethnic, religious or linguistic group' (Douma, 1999). Douma (1999) argues that conflict in SSA (the location of so many of the conflicts of recent decades) is driven by the interplay of political leaders and local actors. Power brokers may mobilise the support of marginalised and destitute populations for violent action against the state elite, and the incumbent state elite may repress competing groups within the population using military force. So, violence can be seen as both a means and an outcome of exclusion.

RRAs: havens for illegality?

In conflict prone areas people turn to migration, subsistence agriculture or alternative survival strategies – black markets, smuggling, informal economy – to survive. Where these conflict prone areas are in RRAs the opportunities for illegal activities may be greater – drugs economies, smuggling in border areas – and if these become well established, the semi-permanent political detachment of RRAs from the rest of a country can follow, and poverty and inequality may make it more difficult to find a solution.

Marginalisation and Conflict.

Some marginalised groups are particularly prone to involvement in conflict. Pastoralists, their livelihoods based on securing access to movement, are likely to resort to violent conflict in a situation of widespread marginalised access to land and water, and a persistent failure of many states to integrate them politically and developmentally (see e.g. Markakis 1993). Conflict has changed in character as a result of resource scarcities, and possibilities of modern warfare. Thus livestock raiding in northern Kenya has become more predatory and cumulative, with substantial impacts on livelihoods, and creating greater vulnerability to famine (Hendrickson et al. 1998).

Theft and sexual violence and an absence of policing.

When discussing the implications of conflict and insecurity we frequently fail to include an analysis of violent crime and the implications of personal insecurity. Fear of theft in semi-arid Zimbabwe was found to prevent some households attempting to accumulate livestock (Bird et al, 2000), while fear of sexual violence curtails women's behaviour. Both influence well-being and can have a profound impact on livelihood strategies and outcomes.

Northern development specialists extend their experience of crime-affected areas – poor, urban – to Southern contexts. However, theft and sexual violence can be more prevalent in rural areas where the impact of social dislocation is compounded by poor policing. Aliber (2001) cites CIAC, 1997 (cited in Hamber and Lewis, 1997) to show that the highest incidence of rape in the South African context is in rural areas. Even where law enforcing agencies in South Africa have begun to take rape seriously, it is likely that remote areas will experience fewer benefits of this extension of the law.

4 Vicious Circles and Logjams: Conceptual Frameworks to Explain Chronic Poverty in Remote Rural Areas

The factors discussed in section 3 (as well as others that we have yet to identify) do not act in isolation. 'Rurality overlaps with other characteristics that are associated with poverty: rural people are poorer partly because they tend to live in remote areas, to have higher child/adult ratios, to work in insecure and low productivity occupations and (in most countries) to be female... different forms of disadvantages reinforce each other... [and] makes it harder to afford the time, information or money needed to seek improvements in other areas whether via market demand or via political pressure... people in remote rural areas are likely to be women (or small children) and in ethnic minorities and each feature means a greater chance of poverty, illness and illiteracy' (de Haan and Lipton 1998: 13 and 29).

These logjams of disadvantage operate at the level of the individual (being female), household (having no one who is literate), the group (being low caste or ethnic minority) and the region (remote and with few resources) and interact between levels. In terms of the rural livelihoods framework (Ellis 2000) these logjams create small 'asset pentagons' that may be imploding: low quality 'human' assets (uneducated and in poor health); few natural assets (no land and reducing access to common property resources); few physical assets (a poor quality house and broken spade); minimal financial assets (US\$1 or 2 hidden in the mattress, no

savings accounts and no access to formal credit); and, limited ‘social capital’ (a network of kin and neighbours with few assets and suffering from drought, and lack of demand for casual labour). Add to this a lack of ‘political capital’ - the capacity to ‘voice’ needs and preferences and influence decisions in social and political arenas - and the notion of the ‘vicious circle of chronic poverty’ seems appropriate imagery. A household in rural Bangladesh puts flesh on the generalities (Box 3).

Box 3: Maymana and Mofisol (Bangladesh).

Maymana is about 45 years old and is a widow in a village in central Bangladesh. She lives with her 13 year old son, Mofisol, who has a growth on his back and is often unwell. They occupy a small mud house with a thatched roof that is kept very clean.

The household’s ‘livelihood’ assets are few. Maymana can rarely get work because she has no special skills, is ‘old’ and her deafness is getting worse. Mofisol is illiterate but now earns a ‘half wage’ (30 taka per day – US\$0.50) on a casual basis doing odd jobs at a local timber mill. Up until recently he was only paid 10 taka (US\$0.16) per day. They have no land as her brother-in-law seized her land when her husband died after a long and costly illness. She complained to the village court but they said her brother-in-law could keep the land as long as he paid for Mofisol to go to hospital. He kept the land but did not pay for the medical treatment! They have some old tools – a spade and a machete – but no financial savings or access to microfinance institutions. ‘The microcredit groups don’t want widows with no income’. She tries to keep a few taka to hand in her ‘petticoat bank’ in case of emergencies.

Sometimes she gets a little help from one of her married daughters. At one time she started begging but relatives stopped her ‘as it looked bad’. She received a government ration card 2 years ago, but her relatives stopped her from using it as the parishad member who owned this belonged to an opposing political faction and they suspected his motives. She knows NGOs operate in the village but has never joined them or been approached.

At present they eat 2 or 3 meals each day – rice, chilli and sometimes greens – but it is a long time since they had meat. Now that her son earns a little money ‘life is not as hard as it was a few years ago’. However, she is worried about the future. She thinks her son needs medical treatment but the government health centre ‘gives nothing unless you pay money’ and private services are expensiveand if he was to fall ill ...

Source: Interview, Biprabari, 20 October 2000

4.1 Geographic Capital

Some rural areas have been characterised as ‘spatial poverty traps’. This is where ‘geographic capital’ (= natural, physical, political, social and human capital of *an area*) is low and poverty is high, partly as a result. The endowments of an *area* explain a substantial proportion of its poverty, once household characteristics have been controlled for (e.g. size, endowments, education). It takes public and private investment to raise the geographic capital of an area, and the prospects for growth in a spatial poverty trap depend on governments and community organisations overcoming the negative perceptions of the area among private investors (Jalan and Ravallion 1997).

Low Returns to Investment.

Where a district's or neighbourhood's geographic endowment is low, returns to investment even in human capital will be low (Ravallion and Wodon 1999), and chronic poverty is likely. Returns on investment are likely to be lower in remote rural areas partly because markets do not function so well: they are 'thinner' - more interlocked (Singh 1989) with smaller marketable surpluses, higher transactions costs, and possibly less good social co-operation to overcome the obstacles. All of these are partly related to distance from major urban centres. Greater distance reduces trade, specialisation opportunities and access to credit. Distance interacts with agro-ecology as a determinant of geographic capital (Bigman and Fofack, 2000). See also Fan, Hazell and Haque, 2000 for a case study of the importance of targeting public investment to agro-ecological zones in India.

Government Spending.

Government spending in aggregate and on infrastructure and services in particular contribute to determining the geographic distribution of income poverty and standards of living. In rural Bangladesh the level of infrastructural development has been found to have a significant effect on the incomes of the poor and a positive effect on their health. The volume of government spending is determined by:

- the degree of political marginality of an area;
- the electoral mileage provided by the area (sparsely populated areas offer less mileage);
- the nature and depth of regional ethnic and religious differences underlying politics, and
- the degree to which policy makers perceive the greater benefits of investing in high potential areas (Bigman and Fofack, 2000: 135).

Human Capital.

Human capital in RRAs may be lower than elsewhere. As we show elsewhere in this paper, food security may be erratic, leading to under-nutrition, damaging children's mental and physical development. Government provision of education and health services in RRAs is likely to be poorer than in non-remote areas. Low population densities may make it difficult to supply good quality provision. Low economies of scale result in high delivery costs per head of population, for lower quality provision; good quality teaching and health care staff may find remote postings unattractive (see Section 4.2); education provision may in an inappropriate form (e.g. ignoring the seasonality of rural livelihoods, in national rather than local language, culturally insensitive – male teachers for girl-children, suppressing local history and traditions) or with an inappropriate content (e.g. an absence of technical training). In addition, private sector providers may find the number of clients with purchasing power too low to attract them to establish a viable alternative to state provision. Where such an alternative exists, price is likely to exclude the poor and the chronically poor.

Where the human capital of an area is low, levels of entrepreneurship may be suppressed, employers may find it difficult to recruit good quality staff, and investors may be less willing to invest than elsewhere.

Social Capital.

Social capital may be lower in RRAs than in non-remote areas. Populations are likely to be isolated from the national economy, and from national cultural and political movements. Bebbington (1997) shows that this is not always the case, and that where there is a positive enabling environment, where external actors are involved in a remote community *and* where there are strong local organisations, social capital can play a critical role in renegotiating relationships with the market state and other civil society actors. Case studies from the Andes show that this can enable the development of high value rural livelihoods with positive impacts on poverty reduction. However, where these positive factors are absent, positive returns from the social capital of the chronically poor in RRAs may be elusive.

Although people in RRAs may have strongly cemented family networks, these may lack individuals able to act as interlocutors with the powerful. The chronically poor are likely to be best linked, socially, with other poor households rather than to the 'gatekeepers' to important goods and services. Thus, the chronically poor in RRAs are more likely to experience exclusion or adverse incorporation rather than positive power relations and mutually supportive networks.

This is not to dismiss the importance of traditional safety nets, but to highlight that transfers within networks of poor people are not capable of providing adequate social protection. (See Hulme et al, 2001 for more on social capital.)

Migration.

As we have shown above, poorly endowed remote rural areas are typically areas of out-migration. The residual population is often insecure: for example, conjugal contracts are vulnerable to migrant husbands setting up second families elsewhere and divorce. And depending on the extent to which women's roles constrained by socially constructed norms, resulting in labour market rigidities, male migration can damage agricultural production and well-being. Examples would be the requirement that ploughing is a male task – widespread in South Asia, and the requirement in some communities (e.g. Orissa) that men accompany women to health centres, resulting in significantly lower attendance of women and girls.

Box 4:

Women left behind by male migrants.

De facto socio-economic roles may be surprisingly fluid, while *de jure* structures remain solid, increasing the burden on women left behind. In Ahmed-Ghosh's study (1993) of a village in Uttar Pradesh, Northern India, high-caste women have been forced to take on the 'outside' duties of sowing and weeding, in addition to their 'inside the compound' tasks of threshing, cleaning, storage of grain and complete care of livestock, due to the out-migration of males. However, because these tasks are on the family farm and are not remunerative, and because of the status implications of women's agricultural labour, women's 'outside duties' are not considered 'work' at all (Ahmed-Ghosh 1993:190). There are a great number of forces operating in a dynamic fashion on women's economic roles in the face of a male family member's migration, including those surrounding land, labour, remittances, the nature of migration, social norms and the structure and demography of a household.

Source: Ahmed-Ghosh, 1993.

Stigma.

The residual population may also be stigmatised: externally by non-RRA people who are reluctant to invest in and trade with an area which is propped up by the state; and internally, with RRA people's self-esteem¹⁶ reduced so that they are less likely to engage in activities with high returns (Bigman and Fofack, 2000: 135).

As a result of this combination of forces, a high proportion of poor people in RRAs are unlikely to be able to diversify livelihoods or develop urban linkages. They get stuck in low-return activities and are unable to resist and recover from shocks. Their only alternative is often to deplete assets, further impoverish their households and slide into, or remain in, chronic poverty.

Safety Nets and Social Protection.

Safety nets (social protection) might prevent this. However, there are potential problems here too. Formal systems work best when there are severe crises; informal systems work best during peak seasons. Neither may work well during slack seasons of normal years, when chronically poor people are likely to need them to counter the difficulties of getting employment or daily income (Watts and Bohle 1993). In addition, State provided safety nets rarely extend to RRAs, though there could be highly administerable exceptions such as employment programmes where these are strong overall (as in better administered parts of India). This means that poor people are thrown back on local social safety nets, and frequently on the exploitation of common property resources (CPRs) in times of stress. Both of these form important parts of the geographic capital of an area. As far as public policy is concerned, neither safety nets nor CPRs have proved an easy option as far as developing supportive policies and programmes.

The extended families of chronically poor people may also be chronically poor, so the possibilities of informal safety nets are limited for them, and world-wide trends to the nuclear family have also eroded traditional redistributive or insurance mechanisms. Low social capital may make it difficult for poor people to join associations and groups to which they are expected to contribute.

4.2 Social Exclusion

Social exclusion refers to:

- the rupture of a social bond between the individual and society;
- being an outsider to the realm of rights and obligations which characterise citizenship;
- discrimination which denies individuals full participation in interaction or exchange; and
- monopolies of access exercised by powerful groups, resulting in exclusion (de Haan 1999: 4-5).

¹⁶ Low self-esteem may have similar outcomes to limited aspirations.

It is likely that many of the chronically poor are socially excluded, and that the mechanisms of exclusion affecting chronically poor in remote rural areas (RRA) are to a degree common across RRA.

Social exclusion provides explanations for chronic (persistent) poverty. *Some* excluded groups experience chronic poverty because the nature of the exclusion is fundamental (e.g. a bar on land ownership for widows, when other routes to income, such as participation in the labour market, are prohibitively difficult or limited). Other excluded groups experience multiple exclusions as a result of their status: stigmatised at the bottom of the social hierarchy because of ethnicity, age/gender (widowhood, AIDS orphans), disability or a combination of such factors, they experience multiple reinforcing mechanisms of exclusion. Even if an exclusionary mechanism is challenged, and inclusion is achieved on one dimension, others will continue to hold the individual, household (or community) down.

Exclusion from access to resources, opportunities, information and connections helps to explain poverty (Table 5, below). In RRA access to all of these may be barred or extremely limited. Exclusion is strongly linked to state, market and civil society structures and interactions. Social exclusion in RRA is likely to be characterised by limited opportunities, uncompetitive markets, poor information flows and adverse incorporation into social structures which seek to subordinate and exploit poorer people.

While the notion of social exclusion is helpful in explaining persistent poverty, the ‘problem’ may be how poor people are in fact integrated into the economy or society, rather than their exclusion, and the blocks to better forms of integration, which could loosen the constraints to reducing poverty. To the extent that ‘feudal’ or similar social structures are transformed by social change processes (which are strongest in urban areas), it is likely that adverse incorporation will be strongest in RRA: remoteness means that economic and social change happens less quickly and that historic power holders adapt to new circumstances and hold on to power through the changes. Commonly in remote rural areas, democratic and electoral processes are ‘captured’ by politicians and local élite, who use patron-client relationships to treat poorer people as votebanks.

Mamdani (1996) suggests that citizenship in postcolonial African polities is hierarchically structured between urban citizens and rural subjects, with the latter obliged to fulfil duties towards ethnic ‘authority’ rather than claim ‘rights’ against urban civil society (a notion that he expands to include the institutions of state and political society). The two groups are linked by the asymmetrical reciprocity of patrimonialism rather than the ‘equal’ ties of citizenship. Rural people are subject to structural inequality in terms of their membership in contemporary African polities. They are adversely incorporated, rather than excluded¹⁷, with implications for their susceptibility to exploitation, their experience of participation as a coercive rather than empowering activity and their continued reliance on patron-client relationships for political representation. Adverse incorporation is difficult to quantify, however, the (political) idea of exclusion as ‘incomplete citizenship’ (Balla and Lapeyre 1997: 420) is measured by UNDP’s political freedom index. Unfortunately, this has not yet been disaggregated within a country.

¹⁷ Mamdani (1996) and Bayart (1993) suggest that exclusion is not a significant force in African politics. Mamdani states that ‘incorporation, not marginalisation’ is significant in the African context.

Table 5: Social Exclusion Processes in RRA.

Excluded from what?	Typical mechanisms of exclusion	Importance in RRA
<p>Resources: land, water, housing, CPR, technology</p>	<p>Land tenure laws and norms, assets to permit access to water or CPR, decision-making <i>fora</i> which women, casual labourers etc find difficult to attend/cannot speak, threats and violence</p>	<p>Typically RRA characterised by greater equity of access to basic resources and less pressure on the resource [not if the resource is of poor quality, often the case in marginal RRAs]; access to technology constrained by capital, information and lack of relevant research</p>
<p>Opportunities: jobs, education, credit; good marketing [=markets?]</p>	<p>Skill requirements, barriers to entry/retention in school and quality of education (e.g. teachers), barriers to progress beyond primary, collateral requirements, threats and violence</p>	<p>Poorly functioning labour market (and ethnicity/gender based rigidities), barriers to migration, very uncompetitive (and often linked) credit and commodity markets; poor educational infrastructure</p>
<p>Information: on entitlements, rights and obligations, markets, information technology</p>	<p>Illiteracy, ownership of radio/TV, censorship and uncompetitive media</p>	<p>Beyond the scope of national media, cost and language barriers; monopolistic market information, poor communications infrastructure, unprofitable mobile phone networks</p>
<p>Connections/networks: kinship, associations</p>	<p>Stigma, absence of resources to 'join', lost kinship networks, confidence, lack of 'muscle'</p>	<p>Limited social networks linking RRAs with metropolitan people, adverse incorporation into 'pre-modern' social structures</p>

Remoteness itself increases the costs of getting to health care and other services, and the poor lose a higher proportion of income making the journey. The relationship between fees paid for services and the quality of services (e.g. education) is likely to be worse than elsewhere, if

resource flows are lower and less reliable, personnel are less attracted to remote areas, and local politicians are less active in attending to their constituents.

As a result, the chronic poor are likely to seek out other local substitute services – traditional health practitioners, informal education. There may be occasions when this is not the best for developing human capital (as with ‘quack’ chemists in rural Bangladesh), though informal and private services should be examined on their merits. They provide a basis for development particularly in RRAs; it may be easier for governments to support and regulate private basic services where these exist than to set up adequate service infrastructures themselves. However, mapping private services often shows that they locate where public services already exist and compete with them.

Ethnicity and/or religious minority status often combine with geography to marginalise politically, socially and economically. RRA inhabited by minority groups are likely to be doubly disadvantaged. There is strong evidence that ethnic inequality is critical associated with differential child mortality in SSA (Brockerhoff and Hewett, 2000). Inter-ethnic inequality in turn can be understood through the exclusion lens.

Barriers to entry. The state may be less effective and processes subject to greater than average delays in RRA. The quality of state personnel may be lower if RRA are seen as punishment postings. Documentation (e.g. identity cards) required may be more difficult to get, as experienced by women in northern Cameroon (Narayan, 2000: 190). Road bias means that professionals and administrators do not travel through RRAs to the same degree as less remote areas. All of this means that the costs of using services and gaining access to state-administered benefits may be higher.

The rule of law, corruption, intimidation and physical violence also play a role in exclusion. It is possible that corruption is worse further from the centres of power, accountability, and monitoring by civil society and the media. In Orissa the ‘pothole index’ (number of potholes per 100m) increases with distance from Bhubaneswar – indicating either that less is spent on road construction and maintenance the further you go from the capital, or that the kickbacks are bigger, and the quality of materials used correspondingly worse.

Police in RRAs are at best inactive, at worst harass, oppress and brutalise. Police often have to be paid to keep away. There is systematic indifference to, for example, rape and robbery. Weak policing leads to the absence of trust in society. Policing in RRA is likely to be weakly supervised, and therefore tend to be brutal. The *size* of bribes are likely to be smaller, but they may still be both a higher proportion of a low rural incomes and of high frequency.

High degrees of social and political exclusion in RRAs would tend to predict a greater degree of hostility and unfairness of local officials and the judiciary, as is sometimes the case in poor urban areas.

RRAs and HIV/AIDS.

Not all mechanisms of exclusion are likely to be stronger in RRAs. Other sources of exclusion *may* run in the opposite direction: for example, *HIV/AIDS* as a source of exclusion may be less marked in RRA if these are off transport routes and have less traffic with urban areas. On the other hand RRAs may provide migrant labour, including commercial sex

workers, to urban areas. Thailand's north-east would be a classic case. The middle hills of western and central Nepal would be another. In RRAs, sources of exclusion can easily be multiple. Remoteness, overlain with ethnic identity, combined with widowhood would be a powerful combination likely to generate chronic poverty households (Narayan, 2000: 205-211).

The local leadership or élite is often a major part of the problem (Narayan, 2000: 83). But there are positive examples of élite involvements – e.g. the Panch (village head + 4 elders) in rural India who resolve disputes.

'The answer lies in starting with poor people's realities and experiences with the state and focusing on bringing about change at the local level while also tracing upwards and outwards the changes in values, norms, incentives, roles, processes, and policies needed at higher levels to bring accountability and transparency of local level state institutions to poor women and men. New thinking is also required to support the "clean and motivated" unsung local heroes of the state and civil society, especially at the grassroots level' (Ibid: 85-6).

4.3 Politics, Governance and Chronic Poverty in RRA

There are a number of key propositions about poverty, politics and governance whose implications for chronic poverty are explored briefly here.¹⁹ The first is the finding that *democracy seems to have little systematic or consistent impact on poverty reduction*, except that it acts to prevent destitution and famine (Moore and Putzel, 2000). This finding is very significant for RRAs, which typically face (or have faced) the risk of famine. Institutionalised democratic politics creates a governmental capacity to respond to short term food insecurity emergencies, a result of the links between political élites and grassroots party activists. A free press also plays a role in keeping government up to the mark on such occasions. Other than this, democratic politics in general do not produce a more pro-poor policy regime than non-democratic; in both cases the range of approaches is wide. Table 6 elaborates. However, whether it is actually the level of democracy *per se*, or broader traditions surrounding the contract between rulers and the ruled has been challenged (de Waal, 1996) and is worth further research in the context of remote areas famine-proneness.

Chronic poverty may be a less attractive target for democratically elected politicians, however. The chronically poor are a sub-set of the poor, and there may already be ideological difficulties in singling out the poor for special treatment. They are the most excluded, and may be excluded from political representation too. On the other hand, if they are located primarily in particular regions, regionally targeted programmes may be able to include them as beneficiaries. Even this would imply that the special conditions, barriers and exclusions they face are addressed, which may be particularly difficult in RRAs if their politics are locked in pre-capitalist social relationships.

A longer vision is needed to address the specific problems of the chronically poor than elected politicians can usually muster. It is easier to focus on the transient poor. Policies for the chronically poor are likely to require a much higher level of social solidarity to mobilise

¹⁸ Based on Moore and Putzel, 2000.

¹⁹ This will be the subject of a later working paper.

the resources for redistribution. Sri Lanka and Botswana are examples of democratic regimes²⁰ which have achieved this; the East Asian tigers examples of (to varying degrees) authoritarian regimes. Despite their differences Sri Lanka, Botswana and the Asian Tigers are linked by their conceptualisation as 'developmental states'.

Social movements may have a capacity to mobilise and enhance the political capabilities of the chronically poor. These ought theoretically to flourish in democratic societies. Remote areas may be characterised by either a dearth of social movements and civil society organisations, or by particular types of movement or civil society organisation. In heavily aided countries, the 'space' for civil society organisations may be effectively occupied by foreign NGOs, at least for a time. These can and do give birth to local NGOs and facilitate the development of community based and other local civil society organisations. It is likely, however, that many RRAs do not benefit much or directly from the activities of wider, national social movements. If the area or significant groups within it are adversely incorporated, oppositional social movements may arise. Inter-ethnic (or religious) tensions between RRAs and the rest of a country may provide energy and motivation for political advocacy. The persistent poverty of RRA populations may militate against consistent involvement by the majority in any sort of movement or organisation. However, there are strong examples of migrant/hometown/ethnic associations which exist especially in Africa to promote the interests of home areas. The extent to which the poor participate in these, even as beneficiaries will be a topic for further research.

RRAs and Decentralisation.

RRAs would logically benefit from decentralisation of power to local government (devolution), or within central government agencies. Given that they tend to vary from the average, decentralisation offers them the scope to adjust national, universal policies to fit local realities. However, there is no reason to believe that decentralisation of itself will work for the poor. It is utopian to expect a venal local élite to do this work: it must be done by central government and national élites who have clearer interests in reducing poverty. Central governments wishing to make an impact in remote areas need to take responsibility for developing visions with and for those areas, as well as providing the incentives to local or regional governments to focus on critical issues.

²⁰ Sri Lanka can arguably be considered a functioning democracy despite its long standing civil war and the alienation of the Tamil and other minority communities.

Table 6: Democracy and Chronic Poverty in RRA.

Key findings on democracy and rural poverty reduction	Hypotheses on democracy and chronic poverty in RRA
Long (decades) exposure to democracy leads to recognition of multiple disadvantages of RRAs.	Recognition of disadvantage by governing bodies and the urban élite does not always lead to effective redistributive mechanisms.
Democracy good at preventing famine ²¹ , responding to crisis. Crisis brings political and media attention to RRAs, and gives RRAs leverage.	Critical for high risk RRAs; basis for approach to chronic poverty reduction in RRAs.
Democracy does not enable poor people to participate in proportion to their numbers in society; in particular the rural poor do not easily sustain 'coherent, encompassing' organisations.	Social movements in RRAs likely to be based on ethnicity, religion, regional interests; likely to take up issues of access to contested natural resources, effective service delivery to the periphery, and political marginalisation.
Class identities are submerged in other more immediate concerns, and articulated through non-class-based organisations.	RRA chronic poor interests may be articulated through ethnic/regional organisations/political parties, but élite-poor solidarity likely to be limited.
Institutional party politics likely to represent the poor effectively	Chronic poor a less attractive client group for political parties than transient poor as volume of resources required for redistribution and time perspective go beyond the politically feasible. Political stability is a pre-condition (may be provided by democracy or non-democratic regime)
Public policies give space and incentives to poor people to organise themselves. Development of political capabilities (personal, confidence, capacity for community organisation, recognition of dignity, collective ideas to support effective political action) is key to poverty reduction. Results visible in greater participation of poor in politics in medium-long term.	Chronic poverty requires credible and predictable programmes implemented over long periods by skilled public officials, which provide the incentives to organise and develop their political capabilities. Governance limitations may be particularly strong in RRA (see below).

Partly based on Moore and Putzel, 2000.

²¹ The view that democracy is good at preventing famine, forwarded mainly by Dreze and Sen, has been challenged over recent years. de Waal argues that democracy is not the only or even the main factor involved here (1996). For example, anti-famine measures in India formed a key dimension of the rhetoric and policy programme of the anti-colonial nationalist struggle, and was an important aspect of its popularity. de Waal (1996) contrasts this with democratic and non-democratic regimes in Africa. Anti-famine policies are thus as closely related to the political traditions and trajectory of particular states, and social contract between rulers and ruled therein, rather than their current level of democracy per se.

Whether decentralisation does work for the poor or not depends on:

- whether the causes of poverty are internal or external to the unit of decentralisation (though decentralisation should also lead to central governments dealing better with the issues of RRAs if knowledge and information flows up the political and bureaucratic chain as well as down)
- adequate central support and monitoring/control
- adequate central challenge to local élite dominance, or Central Government providing space for local non-élite to challenge local élite
- increased accountability through fair and competitive elections, supported by accountability mechanisms which provide information to the electorate on the performance of elected officials. Research in urban areas has found that elected mayors are important (Devas et al. 2001)
- key inputs provided by Central Government – earmarked and secure funding for key sectors, with capacities to deliver; targeted poverty reduction programmes with built-in accountability; support for a hierarchy of authorities where intermediate levels had the management capacities
- long term central support (e.g. West. Bengal over 20 years)
- the drivers, maintainers and interrupters of poverty in the region – is poverty caused by exogenous or endogenous factors, and to what extent can local or even national government interventions do anything to alter the dynamic?

Local élites are even less likely to express solidarity with the chronically poor than the transiently poor, since the means to do something about chronic poverty are very rarely perceived as lying in local hands, and the causes of chronic poverty are quite possibly structural. Nevertheless local and national élites are linked, and the policy debate will be stronger if it happens at both levels. Shared locality at least gives a degree of shared interest between élite and poor, on which can be built²².

²² This shared ‘ideology of home’ has led to many migrant/ hometown/ ethnic associations springing up in different parts of Africa. Such organisations often provide basic services in the home village as well as securing status, a burial place and a sense of identity for urban élites. The extent to which the poorest members of the ‘community’ are able to participate in these type of associations is, of course, debatable.

Table 7: Decentralisation, Poverty and RRA.

Critical issues in decentralisation	Critical elements enabling decentralisation to work for the poor	Critical issues in decentralisation to RRAs
Adequate central support in terms of finance, personnel, supervision, legal environment	Key inputs for poverty reduction provided and monitored by central government: education, health, infrastructure	Capacity building, decentralisation of high calibre personnel; flexibility to vary expenditure for locally appropriate investments
Fair and competitive elections	Local elite's commitment to poverty reduction via inter-party competition, accountability to civil society, inclusive networks. Constitutional representation of the poor and women.	Shared locality provides a basis for elite-poor common interests. Additional effort required to build up civil society organisations.

Governance and Government.

In addition to decentralisation, proponents of ‘good government’ have focused on civil service reform, national justice and policing systems, and key social sectors (health and education particularly). Reforms emphasise efficiency. However, the priorities for improving governance in remote areas may be quite different – and have never yet been separately analysed.

This research will explore the PPA databases to distil a picture of RRA priorities. What is clear from existing analysis is that the poor in general have a very negative picture of services for the poor, except in times of severe crisis. Unwritten ‘rules in use’ (as opposed to the law or official regulations) are very powerful as experienced by the poor. They experience many constraints and barriers to accessing basic services. Corruption is a serious and repeated issue.

Are these issues any worse in RRA? Given remoteness from the central supervisors and arbiters of rules and procedures, it is likely. Evidence is seriously lacking on these questions. Achieving effective government in remote areas may require very significant human resource investments, which are politically difficult to sustain, given the often low levels of social solidarity prevalent in poor countries.

4.4 Conceptual frameworks: a tentative conclusion.

Initially the research will make use of all three frameworks of analysis (geographic capital, social exclusion, and governance), and will seek to integrate them operationally into one by undertaking a problem tree type of analysis designed to the identify root causes of problems in particular contexts. Tentatively, and with considerable significance for policy and development programming, it would seem that the governance discourse is fundamental in the sense that effective and pro-poor governance is a pre-condition for:

- greater inclusion through the political system
- additional possibilities for inclusive social mobilisation through movements and civil society organisations
- greater absorptive capacity for investments in infrastructure and services as and when these emanate from the centre, which could critically alter endowments of geographic capital, market dynamics and context of risk and vulnerability.

Governance can be given a wide range of meaning: politics matters, political ideology matters – pro-poor policies are notably linked to political ideologies in many well known cases. But the policy process, administrative reform, corruption, the justice and security system may also feature strongly in the analysis, depending on the situation. And other factors which may influence levels of chronic poverty include: the nature of leadership and elites and the social contract they have with the population, the political capital of the poor, the politics of capital accumulation and redistribution.

5. Policy Responses

5.1 Overview

The policy responses to the ‘problems’ of RRAs have varied enormously between, and sometimes within, countries and over time. Here we focus on policies to reduce poverty in RRAs but it should be noted that some policies focus on other goals, such as national economic growth (e.g. mining enclaves in RRAs), maintaining global biodiversity (e.g. national parks and forest reserves) or asserting national sovereignty (e.g. resettling populations into border areas).

While the diversity and changing nature of policy makes it difficult to make precise generalisations a number of common points can be identified:

- Public policy for RRAs has often been more rhetorical than real²³. Democratic and authoritarian regimes have propounded policies to improve rural livelihoods but often financial resources and implementation capacities have not followed.
- Implementation difficulties have bedevilled public and private sector activity in RRAs.
- State and market ‘failure’ has meant that self-governance, self-provisioning and local collective action have been and remain important. However, it is only recently that policy has recognised the significance of common property resource management, traditional health practices, village courts and informal financial systems.
- In most poorer countries (with the notable exceptions of India and China) institutional development agencies and foreign experts have been highly influential in RRA policy.
- When ‘big money’ can be earned in RRAs – diamonds, timber, minerals, ivory, drugs – then national and international élite are often able to take concerted actions that ‘bypass’ official policy. Such ‘greed’ often fosters the development of violent conflict (Collier 2000).

²³ See Good, 1999, for an analysis of the failings of Botswana’s programme for Remote Rural Areas.

Sectoral Policies and Metapolicy.

In trying to overview the dynamics of policy, two particular dimensions must be examined – sectoral composition and the metapolicy (or ideological) framework. The main sectoral policies that have been brought to bear on poverty in RRAs are agricultural development (of staples and/or cash crops), land reform, economic diversification, infrastructural development, social safety nets and improving human capital (health and education). These can be combined and/or prioritised in different ways and, as referred to earlier, one policy (integrated rural development) focused on a multi-sectoral approach.

In terms of the metapolicy framework, and at the danger of oversimplification, three eras of metapolicy can be identified. First, is the *state-led framework* of the colonial period and 1950s to 1970s (or post-revolution in China). Public policy would direct development in RRAs, public funds would resource it and public agencies would ‘deliver’ it. Classic examples are cash crop promotion (coffee in highlands), IRDPs and rural industrialisation.

The second is the *market-led framework* (of liberalisation and structural adjustment) that dominated the 1980s and much of the 1990s. This was associated with reduced public expenditure on ‘rural’ and ‘regional’ development, the breaking-up or divestiture of agricultural commodity boards, the removal of subsidies on fertilisers, equipment and food, the restructuring of extension services, the introduction of cost recovery in health and education and the replacement of public ‘rural credit’ by microcredit. This was associated with reduced expenditure on infrastructure and services in remote areas as the public institutions serving them declined in effectiveness. In many cases the private sector hardly took up the slack.

The third ‘era’, it can be argued, has emerged since the mid-1990s and focuses on *improving governance* through democratisation, decentralisation and participation. In terms of ‘who’ should lead development it is eclectic and argues for ‘pluralist provision’ or ‘partnerships’ according to the tasks in hand. Varying ‘mixes’ of state, market and civic decision-making, resourcing and managing development should be the hallmark of ‘poly-centric’ governance (Ostrom et al. 1993). Such mixes are believed to promote the processes that underpin democratisation.

The discourses of both decentralisation and participation are located within the wider ‘agency-centred’ approach of contemporary development studies (e.g. Long, 1992). This has emerged over the past two decades in response to the failings of structuralist analysis, and of development policy and projects, to recognise the potential of the poor to contribute to their own solutions (Killick, 2001). Examples show that households use agency to obtain the best outcome possible, using the resources that they have under their discretion. Hulme and Mosley (1996) confirm that poor households will sometimes use loan funds obtained through microfinance to deal with contingencies and access goods and services rather for the ‘productive’ investments hoped for by the disbursing microfinance institution. Conversely, Devereux (2001) indicates that in certain circumstances food aid will be used by recipients for productive investments.

‘Chronic poverty’ tends to emphasise the incapacity of the poor rather than their capabilities, and suggests the need for ‘external’ interventionist measures (e.g. safety nets) rather than grassroots empowerment. This needs to be balanced by understandings of agency. However,

the chronically poor in remote rural areas make decisions in a severely constrained environment. RRAs are remote from government. They offer limited returns to the private sector and (often) have problems in the representativeness of their local associations. So, one cannot be overoptimistic.

When the sectoral composition of policy in RRAs is combined with these metapolicy frameworks, the complexity of what has and is happening in poverty-reduction policies in RRAs is fully revealed (Table 8).

5.2 Metapolicy Frameworks and Performance.

State-led development and IRDPs.

State-led development had provided a framework for extending patterns of development which worked in non-remote areas to the RRAs. While much research indicated that this did not necessarily help RRAs whose problems and resources were different, this is still an open question, particularly in view of the failure of the private sector to fill the institutional vacuum in some RRAs. It has been argued strongly that in India it is precisely this strategy which is now beginning to have significant results in RRAs (Mehta and Shah, 2001).

IRDPs went out of fashion for several reasons. They were widely perceived to be unsustainable, dependent on donor inputs, and specially created parallel and enclave public sector organisations which did not fit well with national patterns of public sector reform or decentralisation. In terms of outcomes, their results were mixed in practice, and generally better in less remote areas, as illustrated by recent donor evaluations of portfolios of IRDPs by FAO, and the Netherlands Government.²⁴ It is worth noting that some governments and donors have continued supporting IRDPs throughout the 1980s and 1990s when others were abandoning the approach. This should offer researchers an opportunity to compare the IRDP approach with its absence.

Market led development: liberalisation and adjustment.

Trade liberalisation is widely seen to boost economic growth, and proportionately increase the incomes of poor people (Ben-David and Winters, 2000; Dollar and Kraay 2002.). In fact the effects on income distribution are stronger than those on economic growth. Liberalisation leads to a redistribution of income to farmers, and possibly unskilled workers, and income losses to urban employers and recipients of trade rents (Bussolo and Lecomte 1999: 3); however, the picture in reality is hard to establish, and likely to be highly varied.

This received wisdom has also been questioned, at a general level, by Cornia (1999) who argues that in the two thirds of developing countries with adequate data, income inequality has increased during the last twenty years, reversing the decline of inequality experienced during the 1950s and 1960s. This increase, it is alleged, is greater than could be explained by traditional causes – land concentration, unequal access to education and the urban-rural gap. It is suggested that trade liberalisation may be to blame together with the shift to skill-intensive technologies, and that future declines in absolute poverty are linked with inequality.

²⁴ The performance of IRDPs in remote areas will be the subject of a separate working paper.

The impact of liberalisation is through markets; to the extent that RRA markets are highly imperfect, and that poor people operate substantially outside monetised market systems, it is unlikely that the benefits are as significant as elsewhere.

Trade liberalisation will only have a positive impact on agricultural growth if a country's major commodities experience favourable world price trends. Agricultural performance in Central America failed to improve despite liberalisation (Weeks 1999) for this reason. Stronger impacts can be achieved if the macro-economic policy regime (of fiscal and monetary control and less indirect taxation) is adjusted (Hassan and Hallam 1996, on Sudan).

If agricultural growth is a major mechanism through which the benefits of liberalised markets and economic growth reach the poor, it may be that liberalisation helps the better-off among the poor, but leaves a substantial rump of chronically poor behind. This would appear to have happened in Uganda, and Malawi (Peters 1996). In Malawi the losers were: smallholder farmers in the category of net food buyers, low-income or wage earners in urban and semi-urban areas and *smallholder farmers in remote areas*, and the winners food surplus smallholders and traders (Chilowa 1998).

It is likely that RRAs do not benefit as much from liberalisation-induced agricultural growth as core agricultural areas, particularly those producing exports or industrial crops, which tend to gain most from liberalisation – as they lost most from state market regulation and monopolies. Some RRAs do produce exported crops: where they do benefits can be significant. An example would be sheanuts in northern Ghana, a wild crop harvested by women (Shepherd and Onumah 1997: 37). Where food markets were also heavily controlled – as in the case of maize in eastern and southern Africa, RRAs producing the decontrolled food crops also stand to gain. However, many RRAs produce food crops which were never strongly regulated. And the removal of pan-territorial pricing may be negative for RRAs if there are comparative disadvantages.

It is also possible that RRAs experiencing deregulation may also see greater environmental damage if increased production mines natural resources.

Structural adjustment has accompanied trade liberalisation in many cases. A recent review of the evidence about the impact of structural adjustment on poverty was not very conclusive. The balance sheet shows winners and losers among the poor, few impacts on the causes of poverty, little net impact on social spending or political decision-making about poverty. The most positive finding was the counterfactual: that things would in all cases have been worse for the poor without adjustment (Killick 1999).

Adjustment has sometimes challenged the public provision of safety nets – food stocks have been a particular target. Given the reliance of many RRAs on public food distribution in emergencies (and in some cases on a regular basis to shore up failing markets), and the political disadvantage RRAs experience vis-à-vis more favoured areas, this may have reduced RRA food security.

Table 8: The Sectoral Composition and Metapolicy Framework of RRA Policy.

Metapolicy Framework	Sectoral Focus							
	Agricultural Development		Land Reform	Economic Diversification	Physical Infrastructure	Social Safety Nets	Human Capital	IRD
STAPLES	CASH CROPS							
State-led	HYVs ¹ , rural credit, subsidised food	Coffee in highlands, rural credit, marketing boards	State seizure and redistribution	Rural industrialisation, government hotels	Subsidies to RRA roads, bridges, electricity etc	Food subsidies, welfare grants, FFWPs, EGS, drought relief	Universal education	Multi-sectoral programmes
Market-led	Deregulated food markets	Horticulture (e.g. flowers, gherkins), deregulated financial markets	Individual titles and open market	Tourism, game-hunting, services	Little interest – no ‘profit’	Micro-finance	Private schools, private health services	Only when integration increases profitability
Pluralist Provision	To be negotiated	To be negotiated	Maintain CPRs, ‘new wave’ land reform (IFAD)	Micro-finance	Public/private projects	Micro-finance, FFWPs, EGS, drought relief	Co-management of facilities – state finance, local management	When context is appropriate

1. HYVs = High yielding varieties
2. CPRs = Common Properties
3. FFWPs = Food for Work Programmes
4. EGS = Employment Guarantee Schemes

Cost recovery for basic services was widely introduced as part of the adjustment package; by 1995 this was generally recognised to reduce the access of poor people (e.g. Vandemoortele 1995), and a ‘policy drift’ towards free basic services started. The results of this are uneven, with many countries still charging for some services, and many informal and/or supplementary charges in place. Given the general failure to develop effective exemption schemes based on poverty criteria, the greater dependence of the poor on basic public services, and the problems of achieving basic standards of government effectiveness in RRAs, it is likely that the poor there have lost out. In many countries this has not been compensated by significantly higher levels of spending on social services; where this has been achieved (e.g. Uganda).

Emergent key researchable issues include the approaches to improving the functioning of agricultural (and other – e.g. labour) markets in RRAs, given limited infrastructure.

Governance and Pluralist Approaches.

The governance of RRAs is a fundamental constraint on achieving poverty reduction through public policies. Increasing the capacity of decentralised government holds a key, but we have seen that unfettered *devolution* of power to local government may work in the opposite direction. Increasing the capacity of central government to support and monitor local government in RRAs is probably just as important.

Very local government – village level, linked to hamlets where (as is often the case) populations are dispersed, possibly governed by traditional authorities – is probably closer to the poor than the district level, and could be particularly nurtured, at least as an orchestrator of demand and a level of accountability. However, it is also the level at which poor people most frequently interact with the authorities – the police, the court, the village head, the village council. It is a layer of government which good governance agendas have largely ignored, and yet the PPAs (Participatory Poverty Assessments) suggest it may be a very important level for poverty outcomes. An interesting example is provided by the hometown associations in Nigeria, where local government effectively acts as a shadow state, working to collect taxes and provide basic services where central government is unwilling or unable to deliver (Honey and Okafor, 1998).

Central government can also direct NGOs to work in remote areas: examples would be Nepal, and Orissa (India) where governments have pressured NGOs to ‘move west’ to the high poverty RRAs. Providing NGOs work to build the capacity of local civil society, this should help develop mechanisms for downwards accountability and self-management which will eventually make local government work more effectively. Where a strong civil society already exists, with links to poor people, central government can structure incentives to decentralised governments to allow operational and dialogue space to local organisations.

Research could focus on the consequences of adopting a ‘governance’ approach (as above) in RRAs compared to a classic local government support approach²⁵ for, say, the effectiveness

²⁵ Focused on strengthening the legislation, core local government central administrative services – finance, planning, human resource development, plus a limited investment in key service areas.

of safety net programmes, basic services, market development or conflict prevention and resolution

5.3 Sectoral Policy

Agricultural development.

It is frequently argued that agricultural growth is the key to poverty reduction in agrarian economies. This has been argued for a wide variety of countries including India (Ravallion, 2000), South Africa (Khan 1999) and Ethiopia (Block 1999), among others. It has also been disputed, in some cases for the same countries on the grounds that it takes too long to trickle down to the poor and that inflation control and direct anti-poverty measures are more effective (e.g. Gaiha 1995). This would be true particularly where the poor are dependent on wages rather than farm incomes. The chronically poor would gain in either case eventually, as agricultural growth would tend to push up real wages in the longer term (*ceteris paribus*).

However, the contribution of agricultural growth to poverty reduction varies widely across agro-ecological zones (Fan, Hazell and Haque, 2000). The disadvantages of remote areas, in terms of infrastructure, access to markets, insecurity and variability of production militate against agriculture being a competitive sector unless public subsidies and investments level the playing field: however, there may be little other prospect for economic growth, and there may be possibilities of a niche or high value product approach – the development of floriculture in the Indian Himalayan foothills would be an example.

Diversification in remote rural areas.

This section suggests that policies which support diversification in remote rural areas are likely to play a significant role in providing the chronically poor with an exit route from poverty. Linked policies that improve infrastructure, reduce market failures, improve public provision of education and health and allow for increased levels of inward investment will facilitate risk-spreading diversification and improve the returns to poor household's labour and other resources, allowing for the eventual movement out of poverty.

Recent research in semi-arid Zimbabwe has shown that the poorest households have less diversified livelihood portfolios than the non-poor (Bird et al. 2000). The research suggested that there was an exit route from poverty through diversification. While it was clear that some households were trapped in chronic poverty, some had been able to move out of poverty in stages, first by diversifying *within* the agricultural sector to higher value crops, then by including more non-farm activities in their livelihood portfolio, and finally by specialising in non-farm activities, while risk spreading by retaining their agricultural base.

Excluded from Farmers' Clubs²⁶ the poorest experienced less preferential interactions with the market. They were unable to benefit from the economies of scale of buying inputs or selling farm produce in bulk. Selling small surpluses alone restricted them to selling through visiting market intermediaries, and their poor negotiating power exposed them to low farm-

²⁶ As a result of their inability to host work parties - due to lack of the millet surpluses necessary to brew beer and a goat for feeding the workforce.

gate prices. Low and fluctuating farm income, and low returns to their labour meant that they were unable to secure the working capital to intensify existing production or move into higher value crops. Low levels of investment in human capital further limited their opportunities for livelihood diversification²⁷.

In such a situation, the kind of external investment represented by tourist ventures could unlock the logjam (Box 5), although Hulme and Murphree (2001: 294-6) point out the difficulties of attracting external investors on terms that are attractive to local resource users.

Box 5:

Pro-poor tourism.

While remoteness remains an obstacle to the development of tourism, recent research suggests that the poverty impact of pro-poor tourism initiatives may be greater in remote areas with high poverty and few livelihood opportunities, such as agriculturally marginal regions (Ashley et al., 2001). It can be logistically difficult to recruit and manage staff, much less to attract visitors, to work and tour in areas which are remote, poorly serviced, and potentially political unstable. Kepe et al. (2001:2) add that private companies are unlikely to invest in areas with communally-held land.

At the same time, when these obstacles are overcome, pro-poor tourism can significantly decrease the effective remoteness of an area - through improvement of air, water and road transport infrastructure; malaria control and the development of roads and power in South Africa; improvement of communications technology such as radios and telephones in Ecuador and Uganda; and generating ideas and opportunities through linking remote areas with markets and the outside world (ibid.). At the same time, Ashley et al. note that remoteness can foster uneven distribution of benefits (61), and that pro-poor tourism will only work well when the wider destination is developing well (ibid: ix).

Physical Infrastructure – Transport.

RRAs experience deficits in all forms of physical infrastructure – electricity, telecommunications, market places, irrigation and domestic water and sanitation, and above all transport. Here we will just focus on transport, which has a particular significance in RRAs.

Poor transport infrastructure underlies many of the disadvantages of RRAs:

- High food prices result from inaccessibility and high transportation costs (e.g. in Niger – Krings 1993).
- “The cost of transporting agricultural produce from farm to market will be a significant element in a peasant farmer’s decision-making....at the margin it may *the* crucial element

²⁷ Low levels of human capital (in terms of poor literacy levels, an absence of the technical skills in demand in the skilled and semi-skilled labour market, and in terms of the higher risk of morbidity and the limitations placed on physical and mental development caused by poor nutrition, drudgery-intense activities, and high exposure to environmental pollution, poor living conditions and disease vectors) will limit livelihood diversification by making limiting access to well paid white collar employment; by limiting successful entrepreneurship; by reducing an individual's attractiveness to even employers of casual labour; and by interacting with other 'capitals' (social, physical, natural, financial, political) and limiting the individual's ability to successfully exploit them.

in determining whether or not a given producer enters the market economy” (Rayner 1980)

- “Twenty vehicles per week can make the difference between stagnation and development if they carry out the first surplus crops to be marketed or bring in the first medical team” (RRA in Indonesia - Leinbach 1982).
- The time distance of travel to and from RRAs (‘frictional distance’ e.g. McCall 1985) on non-existent or poor quality roads reduces demand for and access to goods and services, the use of markets, organisational development especially the capacity to attract and retain quality staff.
- Opportunity costs of travel diverts considerable resources from other uses.

Low density of road use may make it difficult to justify the budgetary allocations to construct and maintain roads in RRAs (Airey 1985), and even where roads are constructed they are not necessarily a panacea. Off-road communities may be disadvantaged, isolated and made more unequal by road construction in their region. Tarmac bias (Chambers 1993) may result in a concentration of economic activity and investment, as well as the attention of policy makers, administrators, extensionists and other service providers including traders.

Road construction can also bring unwelcome development, disease, resource ‘mining’, conscription and tax collectors. Road construction needs to be complemented by measures which address the interests of off-road communities (Porter 1997, writing about the Jos Plateau in Nigeria), and recognise the inequitable distribution of benefits to the non-poor, those adjacent to the road, and men. Poor people use roads mainly for walking. They are rarely designed for walking, or cycling or other intermediate forms of transport.

Women are often further excluded from directly benefiting from road construction, as culturally determined norms often prevent them from owning or driving vehicles or riding bicycles or motorbikes. Also, women have particular transport problems and needs which are different of men’s, but are not well researched or known (e.g. related to their triple-roles, and especially the collecting of water and firewood, taking small quantities of goods to market, accessing health care services etc.). In RRAs it may be particularly important to assess these separately, given the importance of women as de facto household heads and economic agents. Transport needs relate to all three of women’s triple roles (Turner and Fouracre 1995). For example, infant and maternal deaths can result from the absence of transport out of remote areas to safe delivery of babies (Thapa et al. 2000).

Policy responses in RRAs need to include the following elements:

- a balance between roads and other complementary investments, to generate the returns to public investment, recognising the forwards and backwards linkages which roads generate.
- consideration for women’s specific transport needs.
- support for a flexible market response to a denser road network – e.g. the provision of public transport by private operators.
- effective markets in intermediate transport technology (e.g. bicycles, bicycle trailers, pick-ups, scotch carts, taxis etc.)

Safety Nets, Social Security and Transfers.

The risks particularly faced by poor people in RRA are around harvest fluctuations, volatile markets for outputs, and especially labour, food price inflation, unmitigated disasters and ill-health.

Protection from these high levels of risk and vulnerability is a matter of combining elements:

- livelihood diversification, the scope for which may be limited (Ellis 2000)
- food security policies, including employment protection
- inflation control, and measures to increase competition in food (and other) markets
- health insurance and basic health services
- support to wage labourers to enhance their participation in local and migrant labour markets.

Social security – e.g. pensions or disability allowances, usually national programmes – can have very strong effects in RRAs if they are reached by such programmes, and if many intended beneficiaries (e.g. widows, the elderly, the disabled) reside in RRAs – a researchable issue, but a priori likely to be the case.²⁸ The impact of extending coverage to RRAs (a governance issue) is likely to be higher than extending coverage elsewhere. There are of course significant constraints in extending coverage beyond the formal sector.

Pensions and social or health insurance can be organised by the state, or by mutual benefit associations. There is considerable scope for the latter, based on co-operatives, savings and credit schemes, burial societies and so on. A research question is whether there is an abundance or a shortage of such organisations in RRAs: this could be answered logically, based on knowledge of the pre-conditions for such organisations, as well as empirically. If civil society is less developed in RRAs, the potential role of the state is greater, either to foster private or third sector schemes, or to extend the coverage of national schemes particularly to RRAs.

Targeting social assistance and employment protection is problematic (Devereux 1999). RRAs represent a reasonable geographical basis for targeting, and where the area selected is small, can lead to increased efficiency and reduced leakage to the non-poor Bigman and Fofack (2000). Further targeting by group and/or by community decisions on needy households is possible.

Given the importance of risk and vulnerability as features of chronic poverty in RRAs, further research could usefully investigate two fundamental issues:

- the comparative utility of the above approaches to risk and vulnerability reduction, singly and in combination;
- the impact of sequencing policy and programme/project interventions to privilege security and follow it with development, as opposed to the more common reverse approach.

²⁸ As we have shown above, where RRAs are migrant sending areas, children, the elderly, disabled, and, in many areas, women are likely to be represented disproportionately; where preventive health services have been less effective or conflict a feature, there are likely to be many disabled people.

6. Conclusion

The analysis presented above tends to the deeply pessimistic: poor people in remote rural areas are excluded socially and institutionally, may be adversely incorporated economically and politically, have low accessible resource endowments, and suffer ineffective government. No existing overarching solution (production focused IRDPs, market led development, decentralisation) has worked particularly or uniformly well, and the result of failure to redress the constraints to development in RRAs is increasing geographical inequality. Much of this analysis remains for the present at the level of supposition, and needs to be backed with stronger empirical evidence. If found correct, however, the policy implications are significant.

Given the special characteristics of remote areas – the limited scope for increased production, higher risks, greater vulnerability, lower political bargaining power – it would make sense for governments and civil society to focus on a different range of policies and interventions. These would centre on increasing security, and building political, human and possibly social capital, rather than physical and financial capital. Security (food security, physical and personal security, insurance against ill-health, old age and disability, preventing conflict) would enable poor people to plan whatever investments make sense in the circumstances, take risks which were otherwise not attractive with their savings from migration, self- or wage employment.

Human capital improvements would enable RRAs – often *de facto* still ‘labour reserves’ despite 40-50 years of independent economic development – to compete at least in the national labour market. Education would be a leading sector in this approach. It would also help to deal with some of the causes of chronic food insecurity affecting significant numbers of especially children and women in RRAs.

Investing in human capital is an alternative but medium-long term route to saving and capital investment in the rural economy which is likely to be more viable for many RRAs. Parents in remote rural areas are currently not uniformly positive about formal education. Ignoring for the moment issues of educational quality²⁹, some parents are concerned that they will not receive returns on their investment due to the poor performance of the labour market, and their partial exclusion from it. Empirical research in SSA found that in one area farm households invested heavily in education to equip one or more children for non-farm employment which could then generate cash for farm investments (Makueni, Kenya). This contrasted with other areas where state schools were not seen as the route to success for rural children (Diroubel, Senegal and Maradi, Niger). In Diroubel social investments were regarded more important than educational ones (The Drylands Research Team³⁰)

So, educational investments would need to occur within the context of complementary investments designed to stimulate pro-poor employment. They would also need to be supported by improved security so that parents could afford to take the risks of sending children to school. A human capital-led development pattern has worked at the national level

²⁹ Which can be very patchy. Inappropriate syllabus, poorly delivered in a low grade school environment, by poorly motivated staff – who may be only semi-literate themselves, and who evade quality control measures in RRAs to absent themselves for long periods.

³⁰ <http://www.poptel.org.uk/iied/drylands/pubs.html>

for many countries that have achieved sustained growth and development (Ramirez et al. 1997).

This policy framework would also create the conditions eventually for the success of wider rural development efforts. These have typically been undermined, and limited in their poverty reduction potential by:

- collusion between a small local property-owning élite and state administrators over the distribution of scarce resources: a better educated and more secure society would create the organisations and participate in local politics to monitor and challenge this.
- the absence of development organisations, both private and civil society: this has been constrained by adverse incorporation and patronage based politics which requires countervailing forces to reverse the trend: these can be provided by state or NGO action to promote local organisation.

What are the public expenditure implications of this tentative argument? The centre would need to steer local development strongly, giving flexibility to address local priorities including those of the poor, but not allowing that flexibility to be exercised by local élite until they showed signs of developing a compact with their constituents. The centre would also need to move away from universal provision in a number of areas, with a view to concentrating resources on selected priority sectors or sub-sectors. Universal provision in other sectors would be reinforced, with resource top-ups (finance and personnel) where RRAs require increased capacity to do the same job.

Expenditure packages need to be designed to enable coverage of poor and remote communities. If a basic health package costs \$12 and the government can only afford in the context of its spending priorities \$5 per head, 2/3 of the population will be excluded. If cost recovery partly fills the financing gap, the poor will be excluded. If resources are allocated based on resource utilisation patterns it is likely that RRA will lose out if their capacity to spend is less. Defining service standards and resourcing up to those standards then becomes a critical pre-condition for poverty reduction (Foster and Fozzard, 2000: 38).

This is a debate which must run. There are important counter-arguments (see Box 6).

**Box 6: The Consequences of De-Selecting ‘Rural Development’ in RRA:
the Case of Abyei**

‘What are the social and environmental costs of not supporting smallholder production [in far-flung rural Sudan]? They are mass migration to Khartoum of the rural masses while a few rural élite mine the fragile topsoil with subsidised tractor services...The lesson from Abyei is that support to smallholder agriculture, especially in terms of adaptive research, can pay positive dividends for improving food security and rural livelihood in a sustainable fashion. Much the same can be said for improving livestock production and safe water supplies.

Source: Cole and Huntingdon 1997: 254

IFAD’s Rural Poverty Report takes a strongly ‘productionist’ approach to rural poverty reduction as a whole, arguing that support to smallholder agriculture still retains the key, as it

did during the last 50 years. While its optimism is admirable, and the report includes many examples of success to back it, the validity of such optimism for RRAs needs to be verified.

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