

VOICES OF THE POOR

*Crying Out  
for Change*

Deepa Narayan  
Robert Chambers  
Meera Kaul Shah  
Patti Petesch



*Published by Oxford University Press  
for the World Bank*

# Contents

<i>Foreword</i> .....	<i>xv</i>
<b>Chapter 1: Perspectives of the Poor</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Summary .....	1
Introduction .....	2
Origin of the Study .....	3
The Study Process .....	3
An Evolving Framework .....	4
Focus of the Study .....	4
Country Selection .....	5
Site Selection: Representativeness .....	6
Experiences in the Field .....	8
The Pressure of Time .....	8
Establishing Trust .....	9
Unprepared to Deal with Loss, Grief and Anger .....	10
Participatory Methods: What Worked and What Did Not .....	11
Data Analyses .....	15
Ethics of Participatory Methods .....	16
Challenges in Writing This Book .....	18
<b>Chapter 2: Wellbeing and Illbeing: The Good and the Bad Life</b> .....	<b>21</b>
Summary .....	21
Wellbeing Is Multidimensional .....	22
<b>Part I. Wellbeing: The Good Life</b> .....	<b>22</b>
How Poor People Put It .....	22
Materially, Enough for a Good Life Is Not a Lot .....	24
Material Wellbeing: Having Enough .....	25
Bodily Wellbeing: Being and Appearing Well .....	26
Social Wellbeing .....	26
Security .....	27
Freedom of Choice and Action .....	28
Diversity by Context and Person .....	29
Wealth and Wellbeing Are Different .....	30
<b>Part II. Illbeing: The Bad Life</b> .....	<b>31</b>
The Multidimensionality of Illbeing .....	31
Material Lack and Want .....	31

Physical Illbeing	34
Bad Social Relations: Exclusion, Rejection, Isolation and Loneliness	35
Insecurity, Vulnerability, Worry and Fear	36
Powerlessness, Helplessness, Frustration and Anger	36
<b>Part III. Psychological Experience of Wellbeing and Illbeing</b>	<b>37</b>
The Experience of Wellbeing: Peace of Mind, Happiness and Harmony	37
The Experience of Illbeing: Humiliation, Shame, Anguish and Grief	38
Humiliation, Shame and Stigma	38
Anguish, Loss and Grief	39
The Illbeing of Children	42
Reflections	42
<b>Chapter 3: The Struggle for Livelihoods</b>	<b>46</b>
Summary	46
Poor People's Priority	46
Rural Livelihoods: Producing amid Scarcity	46
Access to Land	47
Diminishing Inputs and Returns	48
Few Institutional Supports	49
Common Property Resources under Stress	50
Migration and Remittances	51
Diversified Livelihoods in Cities and Countryside	53
Getting Hired—Connections Needed	54
Lawlessness on the Job	54
Seasonal Fluctuations	55
Money in Short Supply	56
Informal Credit	56
Formal Credit and Banks	58
Livelihoods That Steal the Future	59
Limited Opportunities	62
Where Life Is Better	63
Individual Breakthroughs	64
The Challenge of Livelihoods	68
<b>Chapter 4: Places of the Poor</b>	<b>71</b>
Summary	71
Introduction	72
The Missing Basics	72
Water—Inadequate and Unsafe	72
Isolation and Poor Access	75

Bad Housing and Shelter . . . . .	78
Energy Scarcity . . . . .	78
No Sanitation—Filth and Stench . . . . .	80
The Politics of Infrastructure and Place . . . . .	81
Trapped in Poor Places . . . . .	84
Environmental Risks . . . . .	84
Seasonal Stress: Worst at Bad Times . . . . .	85
Insecurity and Stigma . . . . .	86
Catastrophic for Children . . . . .	87
The Challenge of Poor Places . . . . .	88
<b>Chapter 5: The Body . . . . .</b>	<b>89</b>
Summary . . . . .	89
Introduction . . . . .	90
How the Body Looks and Feels . . . . .	90
Physical Appearance . . . . .	91
Hunger . . . . .	91
Exhaustion: Poverty of Energy and Time . . . . .	92
Sickness of Body and Mind . . . . .	93
The Body as an Asset . . . . .	95
Body Blows: How Injury, Illness and Their	
Costs Impoverish . . . . .	98
Troubles with Treatment . . . . .	100
Lacking Physical Access and Medicines . . . . .	101
Time Spent . . . . .	101
Financial Costs . . . . .	102
The Behavior of Medical and Health Staff . . . . .	103
Poor Quality . . . . .	104
Positive Experiences . . . . .	105
Private Treatment . . . . .	107
The Challenge . . . . .	107
<b>Chapter 6: Gender Relations in Troubled Transition . . . . .</b>	<b>109</b>
Summary . . . . .	109
Introduction . . . . .	110
Changing Gender Roles and Responsibilities . . . . .	111
Diversification of Women's Work . . . . .	111
Increased Work Burden of Women . . . . .	114
Household Gender Roles: A Blurred Divide . . . . .	115
Decisionmaking at the Household Level . . . . .	116

Male Frustration, Anxiety and Sense of Inferiority . . . . .	118
Domestic Abuse and Violence . . . . .	119
Definitions of Domestic Abuse and Violence . . . . .	120
Causes of Domestic Abuse and Violence . . . . .	122
Changes in Levels of Domestic Violence . . . . .	124
The Opportunity and Challenge . . . . .	131
<b>Chapter 7: Social Illbeing: Left Out and Pushed Down . . . . .</b>	<b>133</b>
Summary . . . . .	133
Introduction . . . . .	134
Who Is Excluded? . . . . .	134
The Bottom Poor . . . . .	135
The Basis of Social Exclusion . . . . .	136
The Stigma of Poverty . . . . .	136
Lack of Money and Power . . . . .	138
Ethnic, Linguistic, Racial and Cultural Isolation . . . . .	139
Physical, Mental and Health Disabilities . . . . .	140
Behaviors outside Community Norms . . . . .	141
Area Stigma . . . . .	141
Self-Exclusion . . . . .	142
The Exclusion of Women . . . . .	143
Changes in Social Cohesion . . . . .	145
Strained Social Relations and Reduced Collective Action . . . . .	146
What Brings People Together? . . . . .	147
The Opportunity and Challenge . . . . .	149
<b>Chapter 8: Anxiety, Fear and Insecurities . . . . .</b>	<b>151</b>
Summary . . . . .	151
Introduction . . . . .	152
What Does Security Mean to Poor People? . . . . .	152
Trends and Patterns . . . . .	153
Regional Trends in Security . . . . .	154
Gender Differences . . . . .	154
Types of Insecurity . . . . .	155
Survival and Livelihoods . . . . .	156
Rural: Uncertain Returns to Farming . . . . .	156
Urban: Insecure Work, No Bargaining Power . . . . .	157
Natural and Human-Made Disasters . . . . .	158
Crime and Violence . . . . .	159
Persecution by Police and Lack of Justice . . . . .	162

Civil Conflict and War .....	167
Macropolicy Stresses and Shocks .....	168
Social Vulnerability .....	171
Health, Illness and Death .....	175
In Search of Security .....	175
<b>Chapter 9: The Character of Institutions .....</b>	<b>179</b>
Summary .....	179
Introduction .....	180
Quality of Relationships .....	181
Trust .....	181
Participation .....	182
Accountability .....	185
Unity and Conflict Resolution .....	187
Valued Behaviors .....	188
Respect .....	189
Honesty and Fairness .....	189
Listening, Caring, Love and Compassion .....	190
Hardworking Problem-Solvers .....	191
Institutional Effectiveness .....	191
Timely, Responsive and Caring Support .....	192
Access, Closeness and Contact .....	193
In Search of Character .....	194
<b>Chapter 10: Governance: Poor People's Scorecards .....</b>	<b>197</b>
Summary .....	197
Introduction .....	198
Institutional Ratings .....	199
Important Institutions .....	199
Effective Institutions .....	200
Ineffective Institutions .....	200
Governance and Accountability of State Institutions .....	200
Accountable to Whom? .....	203
Lack of Responsiveness .....	205
The Power of Documents .....	208
Decentralized Governance: Municipalities, Councilors and Mayors ..	209
Empowerment and Partnership .....	211
Interactions with Private Enterprise .....	214
The Power of Industry .....	214
Shops and Moneylenders .....	216

Governance and Accountability in Civil Society .....	218
Community-Based Organizations .....	219
Local Leadership .....	220
Churches, Mosques, Temples, Shrines, Trees, Stones and Rivers .....	222
Nongovernmental Organizations .....	224
Conclusion .....	232
<b>Chapter 11: Powerless, Trapped in a Many-Stranded Web .....</b>	<b>235</b>
Summary .....	235
Trapped and Tied .....	236
<b>Part I. Lack of Capabilities .....</b>	<b>237</b>
Lack of Information .....	237
Telephones, Media and Information Technology .....	239
Lack of Education .....	240
The Strain of Costly and Distant Schools .....	241
Children's Labor Needed .....	243
Problems of Quality and Relevance .....	244
Lack of Skills .....	245
Low Self-Confidence and Self-Worth .....	246
<b>Part 2. Keeping Poor People Powerless: The Many-Stranded Web .....</b>	<b>247</b>
The Many-Stranded Web .....	248
Poor People's Descriptions of Linkages .....	250
Shocks, Stresses and Sequences .....	252
Agonizing Choices .....	255
The Challenge of Powerlessness .....	260
<b>Chapter 12: A Call to Action: The Challenge to Change .....</b>	<b>263</b>
Summary .....	263
Introduction .....	264
The Challenge to Reflect: The Meaning of Development .....	264
The Challenge of Power: Whose Voice Counts? .....	265
The Agenda for Change .....	266
1. From Material Poverty to Adequate Assets and Livelihoods .....	267
2. From Isolation and Poor Infrastructure to Access and Services .....	270
3. From Illness and Incapability to Health, Information and Education .....	272
4. From Unequal and Troubled Gender Relations to Equity and Harmony .....	275

5. From Fear and Lack of Protection to Peace and Security . . . . .	278
6. From Exclusion and Impotence to Inclusion, Organization and Empowerment . . . . .	281
7. From Corruption and Abuse to Honesty and Fair Treatment . . . . .	284
The Challenge to Change . . . . .	288
<i>Appendix 1 — Study Team and Acknowledgments . . . . .</i>	<i>293</i>
<i>Appendix 2 — Study Countries and Sites . . . . .</i>	<i>298</i>
<i>Appendix 3 — Overview of Study Themes and Methods . . . . .</i>	<i>306</i>
<i>Appendix 4 — About the Authors . . . . .</i>	<i>314</i>