

Endogenous Poverty Assessment as a Contribution to Pro-Poor Oriented Research Design: A Case Study in Potato Producing Communities in the Central Highlands of Peru

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I Introduction and Objective

The International Potato Center (CIP) seeks to reduce poverty and achieve food security in developing countries through scientific research and related activities on potato and other Andean root and tuber crops. The CIP's 2003 vision exercise resulted in a more consequent orientation towards pro-poor impacts and the contribution to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The objective of the SLE's participatory research was to contribute to a better understanding of what poverty or well-being for small scale farmers mean, how farmers perceive potato production in the context of poverty alleviation and what role agricultural support measures play in this context. The results contribute to the **institutional learning** process and can serve CIP and other institutions to plan future interventions.

II Study Region

The study took place in four **peasant communities** situated in the departments of Junin and Huancavelica in the Central Highlands of Peru. In these highland regions (3800-4200m a.s.l.), potato production plays a major role. There is a high incidence of poverty.



III Methodology

For the study, well-being was defined as the opposite of poverty; hence it was the aim to find out what well-being means to the small scale potato farmers. This information was gained by developing and implementing a methodology called "**Participatory Approach to Poverty Assessment**" (PAPA) (Figure 1). The Livelihood System Approach (by DFID) served as the theoretical framework to design PAPA. The strength of PAPA is its openness not suggesting any criteria how to define well-being. PAPA goes beyond a mere material dimension of poverty. The core of the methodology consists of a workshop with community leaders, a community assembly and a follow-up household survey (in total 120 interviews were conducted). During the communal assembly, the community members defined **criteria of well-being**, ranked these criteria and then agreed on a poverty line, from which on a household in this community is not considered to be poor anymore (Figure 2). To understand the **dynamics of poverty**, participants were asked to categorize all community households to their status today and 15 years ago. This exercise assigned households into **four categories of well-being**: Remained Poor (RP), Became Poor (BP), Escaped Poverty (EP) and Remained Non-Poor (RNP).

1	Workshop with community leaders Village fact sheet/Socio-economic and agricultural data/List of households	Triangulation
2	Assembly 1. Communities provide criteria for "well-being" 2. Communities rank criteria of "well-being" 3. Communities draw the poverty line 4. Communities characterize the live groups: "Poor" and "Non-poor" 5. Categorization of HH status in terms of "well-being" today/15 years ago 6. Subdivision of the HH in 4 categories of well-being (RP, EP, BP, RNP) 7. Drawing of the sample 8. Communities identify reasons for the poverty dynamics of each HH	
3	Household surveys Verify and triangulate hypothesis for each category	
4	Semi-Structured Interviews with Key Informants, Transect Walks	
5	Informing the communities of the results	



Figure 1: Set of methods used to assess poverty from the point of view of the participating communities

Figure 2: Example of a poverty line, developed in the communal assembly in Nuñunhuayo



IV Results

While potato production is of major importance to all small scale farm households, the **production strategy** plays an important role for the well-being of farmers (Figure 3): Escaping poverty or remaining non-poor is associated with an orientation towards market production. Farm households that were considered to be non-poor also crop much more input intensive than poor households.

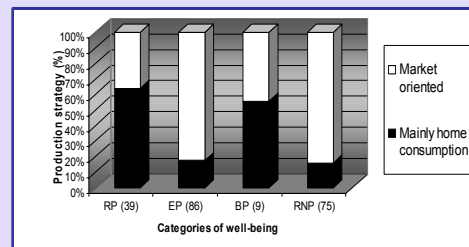


Figure 3: Production strategy in the four communities by different categories of well-being

Looking at the **diversification of income sources**, it is remarkable that very few poor households conduct economic activities beside agriculture, whereas households that were classified as non-poor have more often diversified income sources (Figure 4). Livestock breeding, daily labor or running a small business are the most common forms of gaining extra income beside potato production.

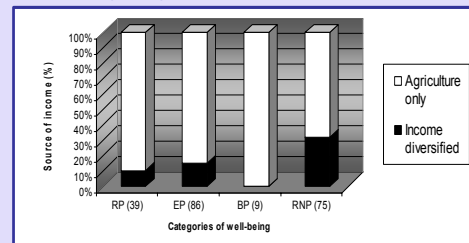


Figure 4: Income sources in the four communities by different categories of well-being

The well-being of households is also linked to **access to institutions** for the provision of information, technologies, inputs and credits. The study revealed that agricultural support measures are often selectively applied in the communities mostly to best-educated farmers especially when it comes to research activities. Poor households showed less interest in capacity building measures and expressed more often the need to obtain inputs than households which are better off.

The farmers highlighted the **role of mutual support** within their communities, which helps poorer families or households in crisis situations to cope with shocks.

V Conclusions

To address research results better to the needs of poor farmers' and to sustainably tackle poverty, a holistic approach is needed. Conducting research and dissemination of results in a way that supports the whole community to strengthen their community spirit and intentions to act collectively seems to contribute to poverty alleviation.

Important intervention opportunities for research institutions like CIP:

Activities which

- **reduce** the risk of crop failures, lower production costs, increase productivity, and therefore contribute also to food security like breeding and supply of pest-resistant and frost-tolerant varieties, integrated pest management systems, innovative seed storage systems and seed selection methods.

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- **support** the diversification of income generation like facilitation of market-oriented crop diversification, development of integrated crop-livestock systems, introduction of alternative off-farm income e.g. ecotourism.

- **enable** value adding to potato and other agricultural products and strengthen the farmers position in the marketing chain like marketing strategies for the community or introduction of processing facilities.

- **secure** the natural resource base like development of locally adapted soil management strategies including anti-erosion measurements, soil analysis, capacity building for integrated pest management, and the preservation of the biodiversity of cultivated potato varieties.