



Tropentag, September 10-12, 2025, hybrid conference

“Reconcile land system changes
with planetary health”

Are poverty-targeting tools practicable? Results from a mixed-methods study of ethnic groups in southern Vietnam

BE THANH DUONG, ORKHAN SARIYEV, MANFRED ZELLER

University of Hohenheim, Inst. of Agric. Sci. in the Tropics (Hans-Ruthenberg-Institute), Germany

Abstract

Poverty Targeting Tools (PTTs) are widely used to identify households falling below specific income or food consumption thresholds, using supposedly practical indicators. While PTT accuracy is well-studied in both lab and field settings, their practicability—defined as simplicity and verifiability in real-world contexts—remains underexplored, despite being critical for effective implementation.

To address this gap and to ensure the practical applicability of the Ethnic Minority Poverty Targeting (EMP) tools, initially developed under laboratory conditions, this study uses a mixed-methods approach to evaluate these tools’ practicability within Khmer communities in the Vietnamese Mekong Delta. Quantitatively, we evaluated the tools’ practicability from the perspective of local poverty-targeting enumerators through Likert scale assessments. We also applied principal component analysis and ordinary least squares regression to identify practicability determinants. Qualitative data (key informant interviews, semi-structured questionnaires, and related field documents) are analysed using the thematic approach to uncover underlying reasons for the tools’ practicability.

Results indicate that while EMP tools are generally practical for implementation, with over 50 % of local users confirming indicator straightforwardness and verifiability, important variations exist. Commonly assumed practical indicators (job type, motorbike ownership, cellphone possession) received the lowest verifiability ratings, while land area indicators, typically considered complex, demonstrated higher practicability than expected. Furthermore, enumerator characteristics (ethnicity, gender, age, poverty targeting experience) emerged as significant determinants of perceived tool practicability.

This study contributes both practical insights for implementation and a methodological framework for pre-testing PTT practicability before deployment. Our findings underscore the critical need to assess indicator practicability across different contexts, as tools developed in one setting may not transfer effectively to another. By identifying key determinants of practicability, this research can help local governments select appropriate enumerators to maximise tool effectiveness in field applications.

Keywords: Poverty identification, poverty indicator reliability, poverty indicator verifiability, poverty targeting, proxy means test, Vietnamese poverty assessment