

DYNAMICS OF CHRONIC POVERTY IN REMOTE RURAL UGANDA

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Abstract

The paper examines the dynamics of chronic poverty in remote rural Bitale village in Kisoro district in South-western Uganda. The paper is laid on the assumption that remote rural areas are more likely to experience chronic poverty because of their geographical remoteness and isolation. According to the findings, one of the major causes of chronic poverty in Bitale village is the mountainous terrain that facilitates entry into and blocks exit from poverty. One is born into and stays in this spatial poverty trap with limited opportunities in form of physical, economic, social and political capital. The chronically poor are typically excluded from the few available services namely; the Universal Primary Education, the community ambulatory services, and the rotational saving and credit association. Such exclusion underpins the inter-generational transmission of poverty among the chronically poor. The village lacked a connecting road until August 2001. However, the interrupter only in form a narrow and steep road laid in interlocking spurs without attendant improvement in access roads, changes in motorised transport activities, direct provision of economic incentives and guidance has not substantially changed the situation and the community still depends on a natural resource based livelihood. Only 10% of the Bitale residents managed to move out of chronic poverty within the past twenty years. Such upward mobility was attributed to family background and individual capability that enabled the few people from previously poor families to acquire education, productive assets and social capital. The last section of the paper proposes future research agenda.

Key words: chronic poverty, remoteness, productive assets, human and social capital, and individual capability

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Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This paper is an outcome of the research that was conducted in remote rural areas of South-western Uganda. It is intended to provide an initial understanding of the dynamics of chronic poverty in a remote rural area. Further analysis will be made of this area by comparison with other remote and non-remote areas in order better isolate the effects of remoteness on chronic poverty and to further capture the specifics of chronic poverty.

From the outset, it is necessary to provide an operational definition of the key concepts used in this paper. **Rural chronic poverty** is that poverty that is severe and multi-dimensional afflicting rural households or communities for an extended period of time (Bird *et al*, 2001). The concept '**rural**' is intended to mean countryside, as opposed to urban. The concept 'severe', 'multi-dimensional' and 'duration' are technical in nature and deserve defining too.

Chronic is contrasted with transitory, transient, or temporary poverty. The minimum number of years for an individual, household, or region to be regarded as chronically poor is arbitrarily set at 5 years, (Hulme *et al* 2001:11 and 2003). Though, the period can be much longer, evidence in some societies has indicated that people who stay poor for five years or more have a high probability of remaining poor for the rest of their lives, and may pass on their poverty to subsequent generation. The chronically poor may also be severely and multi-dimensionally poor.

Severe is intended to refer to 'depth', whereby the individual or household income is well below the poverty line. While all members may experience poverty in similar ways over similar periods of time, certain members may suffer severe poverty because of their gender, age, physical status and social status (*ib id.*).

Multi-dimensionality means that the poor experience various forms of disadvantage at the same time and these combinations keep them in poverty and block off opportunities for escape (Bird *et al*, 2001; Hulme *et al* 2001:20). Poverty that is both severe and multi-dimensional but does not last a long time is by its nature not chronic. The element of duration, multi-dimensionality and severity of poverty build on each other. Hulme *et al* (2001 and 2003) make further distinction; the chronically poor are the always poor, or usually poor, as opposed to the transient poor (churning poor and occasionally poor), and the non-poor (never poor).

The concept **remoteness** means those areas experiencing geographical remoteness (ie physical distance from major cities), and geographical isolation (ie difficult of access because of topography) (Bird, *et al* 2001:12). This research focused on a remote rural area in a remote region. Remoteness is a key factor for explaining concentration of chronic poverty. However, such relationship need to be both theorised and investigated empirically.

1.2 Poverty trends in Uganda

The Uganda economy has achieved significant gains, maintaining an annual average GDP growth rate of 6.2 percent between 1995-1999, with an average per capita income growth rate of about 3.3 percent (MFPED, 2001a). The 1999/2000 Uganda Household Survey (UNHS) has confirmed that in response to economic recovery of the 1990s, poverty rates continued to fall throughout the decade. Based on the monetary poverty line, Uganda has registered a decline in poverty, with absolute poverty falling from 56% in 1992 to 35% in 1999 (MFPED, 2001a: 52). The 35% are those who are below the poverty line and not meeting their consumption requirements. Poverty afflicts more of the rural areas than the urban, with 96% of the poor living in rural area by 2000 (ibid.:52).

In Uganda, poverty is officially defined as *the inability to meet the basic necessities and social services* (MFPED 2000a, Kirumira and Ssewaya et al 2002). The minimum necessities of life are; food, salt, paraffin, sugar and clothes, health services and education requirements. This inability stems from lack of income earning opportunities and/or poor quality of services (MFPED, 2000a). Recent Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) reveals that poverty is more than just lack of income to meet basic requirements of life. Poverty is now known by the government and the people to be a multi-dimensional phenomenon. This multi-dimensionality includes powerlessness in a sense of insecurity, helplessness against corruption in public service delivery, exploitation by service providers, vulnerability to natural and economic shocks, and isolation from the larger society and other socio-economic infrastructure (Okidi, et al 2001, MFPED, 2000a). Similarly, the PPA site report for Kisoro district indicates that poverty is lack of basic necessities and low social status in the community and having nobody or social support in times of crisis (MFPED, 2000b).

1.3 Chronic Poverty in Uganda

In Uganda, attempts to define chronic poverty have suggested a definition that the chronically poor are those who have not reaped welfare-improving opportunities from the reform of the nineties and have therefore remained below the poverty line for several consecutive years (Okidi et al 2001:14). Based on the analysis of the 1997 household survey data (ibid.:14) and PPA II (McClean, 2003) the categories of people that are likely to experience chronic poverty are; **the disabled, widows, street kids, elderly, casual and unskilled labourers, refugees/internally displaced people, and possibly the isolated communities**. According to insights of PPA II on chronic poverty, chronic poverty is perceived as:

?? A situation where *"one survives marginally"* with *'problems that follow'*, *"living hand-to-mouth"*, and in *"perpetual need"*, *"due to lack of the basic necessities"* of life and the *"means of production"*.

?? Lack of social support.

?? Feelings of negativity, frustration and powerless because *"one has no source of life"*. (McClean 2003). The productive assets include included land, tools, and livestock especially in pastoral communities (ibid.,)

In my view, these definitions correspond with the criteria adopted by CPRC as proposed by Hulme et al (2003). The phrase *"problems that follow"* refers to **extended duration**, surviving marginally implies **severity of poverty** and a combination of *"...lack of basic necessities"*, *"means of production"*, *"lack of social support"*, *frustration and*

powerlessness" can be taken to be referring to **multi-dimensionality of poverty** experienced by the individual/household.

1.4 Rationale of the paper

The rationale of this research is to initially test the hypothesis that remote areas are likely to experience chronic poverty due to its very characteristics. The population located in remote rural areas are likely to be lacking access to social and economic services, thus are often poorly educated, lack skills and opportunities to participate in income generating activities.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The major objective of the research was to explore the dynamics and causes of chronic poverty in remote rural Uganda as a basis for proposing measures for mitigating it.

1.5.1 Specific Objectives

1. To explore the nature, dynamics, and meanings of chronic poverty at the community and individual level.
2. To assess the factors and processes which facilitate entry into, or impede exit from chronic poverty at individual, household and community levels.
3. To propose further research Agenda.

Beyond this study, further comparative study will be made using PPA site reports and UNHS survey to identify the contribution of remoteness compared to other factors in causing and maintaining chronic poverty, and how remoteness can be mitigated. Remote and non-remote villages in remote and non-remote regions will be compared. As will indicated by these preliminary findings, remoteness within the village is also an important local criterion in the definition of poverty.

2. Methodology

2.1.1 Site selection

The study was exploratory in nature and used a predominantly qualitative methodology. The study site was Bitale village located in Nyabwishenaya Sub-county in Bufumbira North in Kisoro district. Kisoro district is one of the remote districts located in Southwestern Uganda. In terms of distance it is 567 kilometres from the capital city, Kampala, and 27.8km from Kisoro district town. In terms of geographical location the district borders with countries; DRC to the West, and Rwanda to the South. So the study site was a remote village in a remote region

2.1.2 Information Collection

The study involved a sequence of iterative methodological steps. However, in brief, the study involved literature review (*see references*); pre-visits for site selection, situational analysis of poverty within the sub-county using PRA group discussion-based tools (*see Appendix 1*); and Case Studies using life history techniques, and lastly discussions with the district officials. In particular, the wealth ranking exercise identified three categories of well/ill-being; the chronically poor, average poor, and the rich. The element of poverty duration was established through group discussion and life history interviews.

3. Meanings and dynamics of Chronic Poverty in remote Bitale

3.1 Poverty Profile in Nyabwishenya Sub-county

Bitale village is found in Nyabwishenya sub-county. According to 2002 Population Census Kisoro district comprise 221,278 people, with Nyabwishenya comprising 11,168 people. The topography in Nyabwishenya is characterised by steep terrain. The community has only one feeder road that connects it to the rest of the district. The community feeder roads are in poor state. The main source of income is agriculture. Only a few people earn a salary and these are mainly teachers and civil servants at the sub-county level. The community noted that only ten people have cattle in the whole sub-county, half of the population has 1-2 goats, a quarter of the population mainly women keep pigs. Only one health unit exists at the sub-county headquarter under the administration of a Medical Assistant paid by the sub-county. On average, only 5 out of 10 households have a pit latrine. Two referral hospitals are located in Kisoro, within a distance of 27.8 kilometre. The Sub-county has only 7 primary school and these lack staff houses and, according the community, no school ever attained a second grade ever. The quality of education is poor no first and second grade ever been registered ever since. The sub-county lack post-primary institutions.

3.2 Meaning of poverty and chronic poverty

Through the wealth ranking exercise, the community identified 122 households within Bitale village. Three distinct categories of wellbeing/ill-being were then identified namely; the **rich**, **poor** and **poorest**. In total 10 (8%) households were categorised as rich, 58 (47%) as poor, and 54 (44%) as poorest. With 91% of the community members regarded as non-rich indicates that poverty is widespread in the village. The local language (*Kifumbira*) has the corresponding concepts and meanings that describe the three groups.

☞ *Abakire* refers to the rich. These are the new rich as their parents were previously poor subsistence farmers, but they the siblings gained a reliable source of income in form of agriculture and paid jobs.

☞ *Abakene* these are the average poor lying between the non-poor and chronically poor. This group is not necessarily the **transient poor**, the composition is static and only a small proportion (2/20) of people were reported to have become rich recently. This mainly because the *Abakene* have limited productive and household asset (*see table below and Appendix 2*). The average poor is simply the churning poor as their wellbeing is not drastically different from that of the chronically poor and they simply oscillate between chronically poor and the new rich.

☞ *Abatindi* are the chronically poor, they suffer from poverty for an extended duration, they lack both physical and social capital and, as a result, they lack the capability to meet the basic necessities and their assets stock is low. Their prospect of becoming average poor is limited.

The table below derived from Appendix 2 indicates the difference in wellbeing/ill-being between the three groups (*for comparison, for each bullet read horizontally*)

Table 1: Differences in Ownership of capital between the three groups

Type of capital	Non-poor (Abakire)	Churning Poor (Abakene)	Chronically poor (Abatindi)
Productive/ Household asset and access to credit	?? One acre of land ?? 2 heads of cattle ?? 4-5 sheep ?? Successful farmer/businessman/teacher ?? Iron sheet and mud house and plastered ?? Household furniture ?? Half own a bicycle ?? 6/10 own a radio ?? Join credit association	?? 1/2 an acre ?? No cattle ?? 1 sheep & chicken, no goat ?? Subsistence farmer and provides casual labour ?? Mud and thatched, rough walls, fibres in the window ?? No furniture in the house ?? Uses foot all time ?? No radio ?? Member to credit association	?? >1/4 acre some landless ?? Only chicken ?? Some women have a pig ?? Begg food, rents land, barter labour for beer ?? Small mud and leaking house without shutters ?? Sleeps at fire place on mat ?? Uses foot all the time ?? No radio ?? Excluded from self help
Human and social capital	?? Are educated except ?? Children study through secondary school ?? Majority access F/planning one wife & less than 7 children ?? Has rich and literate friends with in/without the village ?? Fetches water from unprotected sources	?? Semi-literate ?? Children study up to P.7 ?? Have many children typically 10, 20% are polygamous with no to F/planning ?? Has ordinary village friends at the drinking place and a patron outside the village ?? Fetches water from unprotected source	?? Lack education ?? Children are out of school ?? Large family of 15 'God given' children from 1 wife ?? Has a rich patron within on whom s/he depends for everything ?? Fetches water from unprotected source

As the table above indicates, the chronically poor have limited access to productive assets. They are near landless, own temporary houses and are excluded from the social and economic activities and services. The difference in productive and household assets between the chronically poor and churning poor is marginal. The churning poor equally seek patronage [albeit outside the village confines] in order to meet the large family consumption needs. Inter-generational transmission of poverty is likely to occur among the chronically poor since they are illiterate and their biological children were not attending primary school education. The village map indicated that the chronically poor are normally hard to reach (remoteness in a remote area) since they settle in marginal woodland areas over a steep terrain.

At the community level however, all the three categorical groups are exposed to the same poverty traps and are exposed to the same effects of limited access to primary schools, lack of post-primary education facilities and referral health services, drawing water from natural unprotected sources. The only difference is that the rich are in better economic position and have social contacts beyond the sub-county, which mitigate the problems associated with geographical isolation and remoteness.

3.3 Dynamics of poverty at the household level

The Wealth ranking exercise indicated cases of status shift with some households belonging to a particular socio-economic group moving to another better or worse socio-economic category. I will use Hulme *et al* (2003) analysis to demonstrate such dynamics.

3.3.1 Escaping households¹

The community indicated that some **churning poor households** moved to the group of **average rich**. Such mobility is rare and only 2/20 of the churning poor households ever became rich since the 1980s, and this was mainly due to the process of:

- 1) Acquiring **education** in life course.
- 2) Acquisition of asset through **entrepreneurial skills and good management** practices, as they managed to rear quick maturing or prolific livestock for sale, and/or gaining profit from trade.
- 3) **Capital accumulation through saving**: In various ways, they used the loan judiciously, were supported by patrons/friends, acquired wealth through bridewealth, few ones earned a pension, earned initial capital from external casual labour, sold passion fruit, and/or benefited from cross-border coffee trade; thereafter investing the proceeds in other business.

3.3.2 Descending households

The community identified some non-poor households that must have become churning poor, and some churning poor households that moved into the group of chronically poor. Such downward transition was attributed mainly to **loss of productive assets** [*refer to the section of driver section 4.1.3 below*]. Hardly chronically poor households were expected to become average poor within the foreseeable future. As already stated, the chronically poor household suffer from multiple deprivations in form of lack of productive asset and human and social capital.

¹ The term 'households' as opposed to a 'person' is used because where a man is the sole provider in a home his socio-economic status also determines the household welfare.

4. The factors and processes that facilitate entry into or exit from chronic poverty

This section examines the primary factors that cause being or falling into poverty at the household level in Bitale village (**drivers**) and the factors that keep households in poverty over a long period (**maintainers**). The last part assesses the factors and actions that permit escape from poverty (**interrupters**).

4.1 Factors and processes which drive household into Poverty in Bitale village

4.1.1 Topography

Topography in Bitale village in particular and South-western Uganda in general is characterised by steep mountainous terrain which and, according to the author, such spatial poverty trap serve as a natural cause of poverty for over an extended period of time. The views that emerged from the group and the individual interviews did not necessarily omit the role of topography, only that the people tended to emphasise the effects of the bad topography [ie diminished soil fertility, lack of roads, political neglect] as the immediate cause of chronic poverty. Failure to identify topography as the major and primary cause of poverty can essentially be attributed to the fact that the residents were born into such geographically remote and isolated condition, always lived in it and got adapted to it as a normal way of life. According to the author, in various ways, the steep and interlocking hills underpins remoteness and also causes multiple forms of deprivation for an extended duration in Bitale village. The rugged terrain:

- ?? Exposes the soil to erosion leading to decline in soils fertility and food insecurity,
- ?? Reduces land area for cultivation
- ?? Curtails accessibility to and within Bitale village
- ?? Constrains access to schools, health services, market, and information
- ?? Provides a camouflage for rebel activities (ie *iterahamwe*)
- ?? Increases the construction cost of economic and social facilities
- ?? Denies and blocks the communication process, and ultimately
- ?? Results in loss of labour through out-migration.

There is substantial evidence from this site that tells the direct link between topography and intensity social and economic activities. Using the road transect, the study team² observed the relationship between changes in topography and the volume of transport activity, agricultural productivity, occurrence of non-agricultural income enterprises, and availability of social services. The results indicates that the farther one moves from the extremely mountainous condition (in Nyabwishenya sub-county) to relatively flat area (near Kisoro town) the problem of soil erosion, limited mobility, settlement in v-shaped lowlands, lack of tertiary social services and non-diversified livelihood become less pronounced (*refer to Appendix 3*). Subject to empirical analysis, the problem of chronic poverty is likely to be lower in areas with favourable topography.

² Observation was jointly done by the Author and co-researcher Kate Bird using a road transect from Bitale rural village to Kisoro town.

4.1.2 Migration and household impoverishment

The practice of out-migration in search of casual labour as an alternative sources of livelihood is a widespread practice in Kisoro district (MFPED, 2000b). According to the Bitale residents, in middle aged group is more likely to migrate usually prompted by a sudden loss of productive assets, especially after losing land in meeting bridewealth costs, repayment of bad loans, or alcohol expenses. In a remote rural area like Bitale migration in search of casual labour becomes more appealing due to lack of rewarding labour opportunities, coupled with lack of social capital in form of prosperous relatives and friends. In particular, the youth migrate in order to raise money for bridewealth payment.

Kothari's (2003) observation that that migration can be best understood as a cause and consequence of chronic poverty for those who move as well as those who stay behind is relevant to this south-western part of Uganda. Evidence indicates that migrants' wives solely struggle to cater for the household subsistence needs, seek out income generating opportunities, as well as participating in community activities. The wives are left in charge of meeting household basic necessities, food sustenance, children's school requirements, construction and maintenance of the dwelling and other responsibilities. Meeting such roles is almost impossible since the husband's immediate cause of migration is usually household impoverishment and near-landless.

Case study: Wife to migrant labourer abandoned for 20 years

He left me in an old mud and fibre thatched house. One day, the house crumbled down. Luckily, I had gone to the other side of the village to look for casual work and the children were at school. I had to cancel the search for casual work and I would keep around during the day, and we would seek refuge in the neighbour's kitchen at night. As if God had spoken to me, by the time the house collapsed I had stocked the iron sheet after selling my pig. During the construction process, the neighbours assisted me with nails and poles to construct this small house I am living in.I earn Ushs 600 (\$ 0.30) per day from casual labour and I spend the money on children's school requirement and sometimes I do not earn that because I have to work for food. Right now I am resigned, I am tired of looking for work on a daily basis, I feel like not searching any more

On the part of the migrant, the chances of achieving improved economic status are usually low. According to the community, the outcome of migration varies considerably. Some migrants fail to adapt to new ecological conditions and contract malaria and return home poorer than ever before. Some find partners in the new place of work, enter marriages and forget about their traditional wife and children. Others return but spend the money on non-commercial transaction mainly, alcohol and bridewealth for a second wife or sons' marriages and thereafter return in fresh search of work. The PRA session indicated;

A migrant's family persistently lacks basic and school requirements. The migrant husband only returns during Christmas holiday with a few items. He impregnates the wife and returns to Kampala city leaving the wife behind to content with the problems.

4.1.3 Loss of productive Assets

The status shift of the non-poor becoming churning poor and the churning poor becoming chronically that has been identified above is mainly due to the loss of productive assets. As already indicated; loss of productive assets is mainly due to selling off one's land to pay own or sons' bridewealth; to meet the cost of treating chronic illnesses (ie malaria, measles, skin diseases); or to repay failed loan; or loss of cattle due to cattle disease. The failure to repay the loan and the resulting drive into chronic poverty was reported to be a common problem among the elderly people who are too weak to effectively invest the loan. As already indicated, loss of productive assets is indirectly linked to remoteness. Remote Bitale attracts few labour opportunities as a basis for diversifying sources of income and land turns out to be the only available marketable commodity to overcome risks and shocks. Descending households normally fail to regain their previous position because the actual transition involves disposing of the little productive assets the own and, in some cases, that downward transition also tends to occur during one's old age.

Bridewealth is a major cause of impoverishment and the bridegroom's family can pay as high as Ushs 800,000 (\$450)⁵ in bridewealth costs. The community indicated that, the higher the number of male children in a family [common among the churning poor], the higher the possibility of that particular household becoming impoverished through payment of bridewealth. To the bride's family, bridewealth does not normally serve economic utility [*interrupter*]. Illustrations were made where some fathers recall their adolescent daughters from school to marry and the fathers use the same bridewealth to marry second wives. Such decisions partly explain the condition of churning poverty. And the mother rarely benefits from bridewealth.

Case study: Bridewealth and wife abandonment

We produced 10 children and 2 died at a later stage. Currently, we have two boys and six girls. Out of the six girls, three got married and the bridewealth for those two girls was paid in form of cash amounting to Ushs 100,000 (\$56) and 70,000 (\$39) respectively. [*she is sad*] I lost out of that, all what I deserved from my husband was one cloth and he spent the rest of the money on alcohol and left for Kampala in search of casual labour.

4.1.4 Shocks and Vulnerability

The remote areas experience shocks and risks partly stemming from the inherent condition of the remoteness (Bird 2001 quoting Sinha and Lipton 1999). These shocks erode household assets (productive, human, financial and social) which drives the household into chronic poverty or damaging their ability to move out of poverty.

The occurrence of shocks in Nyabwishenya sub-county date as far back as 1930. The community reported shocks that must have driven into and/or maintained the households and community in poverty. Both exogenous (covariant) and endogenous (idiosyncratic) shocks were identified by the community as having occurred in Nyabwishenya sub-county.⁷

⁶ The items include; a cow or equivalent in monetary terms, presents to the in-laws (father, mother and brother) and presents to the bride herself.

⁷ According to Bird et al (2001) exogenous shocks are external threats to livelihood security (e.g. climate, market collapse, and civil strife) and endogenous relates to internal capability of a household or community.

Exogenous shocks

Physical-ecological related shocks

There has been a series of harvest failures since 1930s due to drought and pests and livestock diseases. In 1993, for instance, serious food shortage occurred due to prolonged drought and, also recently the *El Nino* weather phenomenon that is characterised by prolonged wet and dry seasons with a long gestation period to the next planting season was also associated with food insecurity. Crop and animal diseases were also mentioned as one of the major causes of decline in household income. In the year 2000 the coffee-wilt disease occurred and destroying the coffee plant. This was followed by a disease that attacked the passion fruit crop and which also coincided with castle fever that affected poultry. The decline in passion fruit production has had a tremendous negative impact on household income and curtailed the process of livelihood diversification. On average, the landed households lost income of approximately Ushs 2000 per month due to the passion fruit crop failure, disrupting the transition of the churning poor becoming rich.

The steep topography makes the area vulnerable to landslides that occur during the rain season of September-November and March-April. In 2002 en-mass soil block collapsed in Nteko Parish in Nyabwishenya sub-county resulting into; loss of lives [two children died], destruction of property [10 house collapsed] and loss of crops. The disaster was reported to the Ministry of Disaster Preparedness but possibly due to the geographical isolation no assistance was received from the ministry.

Political conflict related shocks

Because of their geographical isolation, border areas are more vulnerable to armed conflicts than any other area within a given geo-political boundary. The existence of mountainous terrain and adjoining Bwindi impenetrable forest occasionally provided a cover for *Iterahamwe* rebels. During year 2000 the rebel used to attack communities along the Uganda (Nyabwishenya) and DRC's border stealing food and money and disrupting production. At one time, the border community lost Ushs 400,000 that had been painstakingly mobilised for the local credit scheme.

The scenario relates to conflict resolution and the subsequent loss cross-border trade opportunities that previously flourished under the situation of lack of compulsory jurisdiction. The withdrawal of Uganda's troops from Northern Kivu province in eastern DRC was associated with Uganda's loss cross-border with the DRC chiefs turning hostile to Ugandans who are in search of land, food, forest fibres and casual labour.

Policy related shocks

In a bid to promote tourism, in 1990 the Uganda government upgraded Bwindi game reserve to the status of a National park. This resulted into closure of the road connecting Kisoro town to a tea estate at Kayonza in Kanungu district through the Bwindi National Park. As a result, the men lost an important direct route to casual labour on the tea estate and social capital in form of relatives and friends in Kanungu district.

Endogenous

These intra-household shocks have been discussed elsewhere in this report as drivers or maintainers and that main victims of such are women .

The effects of shock on the chronically poor

Most of those shocks disrupt what Ellis (2001) termed the natural resource-based livelihoods. However, contrary to Ellis' livelihood analysis, in a remote area like Bitale there are few possibilities of mitigating or spreading the risks in order to reduce individual and family vulnerability to adverse events and trends. Mitigation of risks is only possible if a given geographical area has access to economic and social services and opportunities that can serve as a basis for diversification, coping, or moving out of the shock. As already indicated the chronically poor in Bitale lack assets (land, livestock, human and social capital and liquidity). In event of shocks, the available options are seeking patronage or to out-migrate in search of casual labour, aggravating poverty within the household.

4.2 Factors and processes that maintains the poor in Chronic Poverty

This section examines the processes and factors that maintain the chronically poor in poverty for along duration.

4.2.1 *Physical Accessibility Constraints*

Poor accessibility⁸ to social and economic service is directly linked to bad topography that has been examined above. Poor accessibility in Nyabwishenya sub-county makes the establishment of facilities costly and utilisation of the few available social services for the attainment of human development difficult. In order to link up Nyabwishenya to the rest of Kisoro district and Uganda, the government opened up a 7km-road stretch in August 2001. Before then, the sub-county was practically cut off from the economic gains from the reforms of the 1990 in Uganda. Still, the new road is yet to attract public and commercial vehicles, foot is still the dominant mode of transport, and inflow and outflow of goods and services is still minimal. The first 6.4km stretch from Bitale to Kisoro town is impassable for a 2-WD vehicle _ it is a one-carriage-way, with steep and sharp bends and rough gravel surface. It takes 1.50 hours to cover a distance of 27.8km from Bitale village to Kisoro in a good 4-wheel drive, which is approximately 15km/h (*refer to Appendix 3*).

As a result both the rich and the poor think that road extension serves more of an administrative purpose than an economic one. As indicated by the local administration.

Only 10 government vehicles reach the sub-county Headquarter in a year. These are mainly Resident District Commissioner (RDC) and Local council (LCV). These only come for important assignments like mobilising the community for tax payment, control of epidemic, and immunisation.

All the same, the chronically poor are immediate potential beneficiaries of the improved road condition. They are excluded from the mainstream economic and social services and are geographically isolated in remote rural area. And, make more internal trips on the almost impassable community access roads in search of casual labour, land, food, visitation and forest fibers more than on the feeder road (*refer to Appendix 4 for the mobility chart and accessibility constraint*).

4.2.2 *Inability to benefit from market*

The findings indicates that the more an area is geographically isolated the lower the chances of benefiting from a market economy and moving out of poverty. Nyabwishenya sub-county lacks market outlet and the nearest market was located within a distance of 6.4km farther up at Murparka border post en-route Kisoro town. The few agro-produce buyers in Murpaka market dictate the price. The poor, mostly churning poor, have no choice but to sell off their items in order to buy a few basic necessities from the same market.

⁸ According to Fatemeh Ali Nejadfard, the term *accessibility* encompasses ‘**mobility**’ of people and ‘**locations**’ of different services/facilities, Fatemeh Ali-Nejadsfar (*no date*).

However, the chronically poor from Bitale are in weak position to influence and benefit from the market. They lack sources of marketable commodities (except forest products and eggs); they are excluded from credit associations and the local labour opportunities are slim due to the widespread poverty, as the case study below may indicate.

Case study: Chronically poor wife to migrant labourer

The church normally advises us to set up small business. I cannot really tell what kind of a business a person can have in this village. The market is lacking and lucrative markets are located far away in Kisoro [town]. I lack initial capital. I gather information that a person can get a credit but what if the business fails? I look for a loan or else I will be staking out my small piece of land and the house on it. None of my friends ever received a loan and I don't know how it works out.

4.2.3 Access to Social Services

The physical remoteness constrains access¹⁰ to education by the poor and non-poor alike. The walking distance to the seven primary schools ranges from 1 to 12km, with an average distance of 6km. Remoteness itself undermines the quality of primary education in Bitale village since the qualified teachers avoid working in isolated rural areas. Only four fairly qualified teachers were serving the seven schools¹¹. Lack of staff houses means that teachers cover a long and tedious distance to schools on a daily basis. As a result, the quality of education is poor and none of the schools ever registered a second grade in Primary Leaving Examination.

Even under the UPE programme, the chronically poor are unable to meet the required scholastic materials. Out of the five case studies of the chronically poor I interviewed, only one had all his six children attending primary school. And this was mainly because the wife was such a hardworking person with her income supplemented with some financial support from her brother (social capital).

The problems associated with remoteness and access to education are equally applicable to the delivery of health service. Where motorised transport and quality health services are lacking within the locality, the community instituted self-help ambulatory services which involve carrying a patient on a traditional stretcher (*Engozi*) to the referral health services. The burden of covering 27km implies that *Ngozi* is organised only when the illness is serious enough to warrant referral services. The outcome sometimes is fatal.

Nonetheless, the chronically poor are excluded from the *Ngozi* scheme as they are unable to meet the monthly subscription of Ushs 1000 (\$ 0.6). Lack of access to education and health services by the chronically reduces their productivity, retards the potential for personal growth and fulfilment and denies them marketable skills as a vehicle for moving out poverty.

¹⁰ Here 'access' here is intended to refer to the availability of services, location of services, distance, transport service, affordability of service, quality of service and acceptability of services by the people.

¹¹ Two teachers hold a Diploma and two have a Grade three Certificate.

4.2.4 Lack of Social Capital

In a remote area where the land space is limited, markets are weak and transport services are lacking a person would essentially move out capital through familial and social networks and contacts. However, evidence from the case studies indicates that the chronically poor lacked human and social capital within their patrilineal and matrilineal descent. The relatives to the chronically poor, in various ways, lacked [enough] education, had permanently migrated to within or outside Uganda, survive or died without any inheritable assets, are physically or mentally disabled, or got married to a poor spouse. Lack of family support explains why the chronically poor resort to patrons for social and economic support. Nevertheless, such patron-client networks are essentially exploitative since they are based on an equal social relationship.

4.3 Factors and processes that facilitate exit from chronic poverty

The wealth ranking exercise indicated that 8 or 10% percent of the community members were regarded as new rich and that 2 out of 20 of the churning poor had moved to the group of the rich in recent years. Those referred to as the rich have an acre of land; majority are educated beyond primary level and some (3) in fact studied up to the University; have livestock (2 heads of cattle, 6 goats, 4-5 sheep) and they can afford hiring labour. This section assesses the factors and actions that permit escape from poverty (*interrupters*). Unlike the maintainers seen above the factors that facilitate exit from poverty relates to individual actions and capabilities locatable at individual and household level.

4.3.1 Family background and social networks

Where formal anti-poverty programmes are lacking, a person is more likely to depend on social capital in form of kinship ties and friends for the initial capital. One's family seems to have played a crucial role in shaping the lives of the current rich through the process of socialisation, affection, economic co-operation and religious upbringing. The rich reported to be coming from fairly stable families characterised by monogamous marriages, fairly small number of children of less than 10 children [compare with more than 15 children for the chronically poor], and stable in family composition as the fathers always lived or moved with their family. According to the rich themselves, monogamous marriage has less friction between parents and it makes it easier to manage and train the children on a personal basis. The family gave the children strict discipline and socialization process emphasizing handwork and, sometimes, self-denial.

Case study: Semi-literate rich person

My parents were poor and that explains why I dropped out of school in primary four in 1976. My elder brother dropped out in primary six. We used to wake up at 7:00am and dig before we go to school. After school we had to tend to goats. I personally used to work for others to get money for soap and books.

4.3.2 Access to education

Like the chronically poor, a large number of the new rich come from a generation of semi- or un-educated parents (*refer to Appendix 5*). However, the parental investment in children's education, especially male children, blocked the inter-generational transmission of poverty. At the time of the study, three of the new rich were university graduates, one of whom was the incumbent Sub-county chief lobbying the district authority for accelerated

poverty reduction within his sub-county. The current generation of the rich was equally investing education for their own biological children and siblings. In some cases, before the commencement of a new school term they contract a loan portfolio in order to meet the high cost school requirements for their children and relatives¹².

4.3.3 Accumulation of Household and Productive Asset

The rich managed to build up an asset stock in form of land and livestock through taking up opportunities within their immediate environment. One elderly rich person managed to exploit the situation and accumulated more than 50 acres of land over the past years.

During that time [1933-1945] the people used to migrate to Buganda, Congo, Kasese in search of employment, I was able to acquire large size of land and till today I have not sold it

Equally, the new rich adopt various entrepreneurial skills to move out poverty and accumulate productive asset. They generate income from more than one source (salary, farming, livestock, passion fruit etc); invest that money in fast-maturing or prolific livestock (goats, sheep or castrated calves); they quickly sell them off and acquire indigenous cows. They are able to pool money for a revolving credit scheme, contributing a principal of Ushs 200,000 (ie \$110) each. Besides, they contribute a membership fee of Ushs 5000 each, which is pooled to form a parallel credit scheme designated for the average poor, charging them a high interest rate ranging between 20-30% on the loan disbursed. Such 'need-to-achieve' traits are not peculiar to the educated rich only. The semi-literate rich person I interacted with bear compensatory traits of being gregarious and outward looking that made him move out of poverty becoming rich, as indicated below.

Case study: Semi-literate rich person

In order to raise pridewealth I had to work as a migrant labourer in Luwero. On the first trip, I invested the money in an oxen, which I later sold off and bought female calf. I subsequently returned to Luwero three times and used the money to buy three oxen and sold them and bought three cows. However, in 1999 I lost three cows due to Pneumonia Bovine, albeit previous vaccination. Now I have five cows and 5 acres of land, 2 goats, one radio... [When opportunity came] I grew passion fruit and I used to earn Ushs 2,000 per week. I used that income to contribute to the local credit scheme contributing Ushs 5000 per month. I later got a loan amounting to Ushs 130,000 and I supplemented that with my saving and bought land worth Ushs 230,000.

The other sources of wealth are the friends. My late father used to tell me that one cannot be a man of substance unless he acquire friends.... I seek loans from one of my friends and pay back promptly even when it means selling off some of my heads of cattle... While others are drinking during in the evening, I spend that time to fencing off my grazing land. I do not drink because I am saved I have four children and are attending school and my prayer is that they reach University.

Monogamy among the rich allows for saving and accumulation of wealth, and the rich would think twice before selling off their personal property to marry. It looks as if the condition of remoteness coupled with vulnerability among the poor creates an opportunity for the rich to accumulate land.

¹² Out of the seven rich respondents, for instance, four had previously borrowed between 80,000-500,000 shillings in order to meet school requirements, two to acquire land, and only one to settle domestic problems.

4.3.4 Religious values

Religion and exposure play a major role in economic mobility. The parents to the rich are/were either clergy, saved, or ever served as a casual labourer. According to the rich, Church service is an important source of developmental information, especially where the communication infrastructure is non-existent. I

5. Discussion and Conclusion and the Research Agenda

5.1 Summary and Conclusion

The underlying assumption of this study is that there is a direct link between remoteness and chronic poverty. In this respect, the emerging picture indicates that remoteness with its defining factor of bad topography drives and blocks the inhabitants from economic and social opportunities and maintains people in poverty through the limited to productive assets, education and health services and social capital. The chronically poor are more vulnerable to such factors and processes because of their weaker economic and social position. In a geographically isolated area, moving out of poverty is largely determined by the individual's family background and capability, which enable a person to acquire education and productive asset thus moving beyond the spatial poverty traps. The table below summarises the emerging findings especially the interplay between remoteness and chronic poverty through drivers, maintainers and interrupters.

Table 2: Summary of relationship between remoteness and poverty

Drivers (being and falling into)	Maintainers (keeping people in poverty over a long period)	Interrupters (Factors and actions which enable people escape poverty)	Link between remoteness and drivers, maintainers and interrupters of poverty
<p>?? Remoteness ✗Distance ✗Mountainous terrain ✗Geographical isolation</p>	<p>?? Failure to construct road ?? Failure to open up and maintain access roads ?? Failure to offer economic incentives ?? Lack of human capital in the area ?? Lack of community CBO ?? Lack of/distant markets</p>	<p>?? Improved road conditions ?? Making use of the new road to the market ?? Target working habits</p>	<p>The distance & terrain underpins remoteness and the intrinsic cause of poverty and cp. Inability to offer improved roads, economic incentives and lack of change agents maintains the s/c in cp. The escape route currently lies in making use of the new poor road or migration but serves more of an administrative function.</p>
<p>Out-migration migration loss of human and social capital</p>	<p>?? Permanent abandonment ?? Staying put in an impoverished home ?? Lack of innovation ?? Loss of social capital ?? Failure by the migrant to exploit opportunities at the migration destination ?? Invest migrant's saving in non-commercial transactions (bridewealth and alcohol)</p>	<p>?? Target working habits ?? Investing the money in income generating activities and productive assets (land, livestock)</p>	<p>A person migrates to escape regional inequality and isolation to find better source of livelihood elsewhere. The low labour opportunities will keep the migrant's family in c/p. The returning migrant normally fails to identify viable investment opportunities in Bitale village and end up using the money in non-commercial transactions.</p>
<p>?? Loss of productive assets through sale to pay bridewealth, loan, medical cost ?? Sub-division of inheritable land</p>	<p>?? Small productive assetbase ?? Remarrying and large number of male un-educated children ?? Punitive interest on loan imposed by the rich ?? Old age and vulnerability</p>	<p>?? Monogamy ?? Resettlement ?? Target working habit</p>	<p>The geographical isolation curtails diversified sources of income and the only alternative is to sell off land and livestock to meet the household expenditure.</p> <p>Limited access to reproductive services in isolated areas explains the large family phenomenon</p>
<p>?? Shocks and Vulnerability (pests and livestock diseases, Govt policy, Conflict, Landslides..)</p>	<p>?? Low recovery capability due to diminished assets ?? Poor/lack of external assistance ?? Limited livelihood diversification</p>	<p>?? Reliance on salary ?? Diversifying sources of livelihood</p>	<p>The shocks inherently emanate from the geographical environment. Remote areas are susceptible to insecurity and adverse ecological factors. Few possibility of mitigating risks</p>
<p>?? Remoteness and social services</p>	<p>?? Limited access to quality education ?? Inability to have education and persistence of illiteracy ?? Inability to educate girl child ?? Distance and early school drop out (esp girl-child) ?? Inability to join post-primary schools</p>	<p>?? Seasonal migration for quality education. ?? Community based transporting scheme (Engozi)</p>	<p>Physical accessibility in remote areas is limited and the coping mechanism adopted to mitigate the effects of marginality are expensive, un-sustainable, or only perpetuates chronic poverty</p>

	schools	??	Resorting to traditional healers	
	?? Lack of qualified teachers	??	Lack of quality health facilities & distance to referral hospital	
	?? Chronic illnesses and reduced productivity	??	Dual residence one home in Bitale and another in Kisoro	
	?? High healthcare cost			

The table above indicates that remoteness in terms of geographical remoteness and isolation serves as an entry into poverty, maintains a household in poverty for an extended duration, and even curtails the escape route from poverty (**interrupter**). In other words remoteness is a cause and consequence of poverty. It is also likely that the remoteness constrains the role of government in causing and regulating the economic and social development. This is basically because within budgetary constraints the government is little resources invested may not substantially offset development in a remote rural area. Yet the government is not prepared to use the spatial poverty traps or regional diversity as a tool for sustainable poverty reduction.

There are some methodological concerns that are worthy noting also. In view of the individual actions that determine one's exit from chronic poverty as presented above, the methodological approach of examining poverty from structural issues at the macro and meso levels is essentially deductive and inadequate. Chronic poverty implies some but not all which makes inductive methods also equally appealing.

5.2 Research agenda

The issues presented above are tentative results based on one site in one region of Uganda. In the future, further analysis will be required to focus on:

- 1) The contribution of remoteness compared to other factors in causing and maintaining chronic poverty.
- 2) Comparing the dynamics of chronic poverty in remote and non-remote villages in remote and non-remote regions.
- 3) Exploring the role of different geographical features (ie mountains, escarpment, islands, forestry, semi-aridity) in causing poverty and chronic poverty.
- 4) The influence and effect of remoteness of on the various vulnerable groups.
- 5) The determinants for escaping chronic poverty in the past and present
- 6) Exploring the policy implication for mitigating remote related chronic poverty.