

Fighting **Poverty** together

A REPLICATION GUIDE

Poverty is the denial of opportunities and choices to lead a long, healthy, creative life, and to enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, dignity, self-esteem, and respect of others."

**United Nations
Development Program**

Poverty remains the most important developmental problem of the country today. In the mid-1990s, the Philippines made significant strides in reducing poverty incidence from 39% in 1991 to 36% in 1994, thanks to fast and sustained economic growth.

The combined effects of the Asian financial crisis and the economic slowdown

during the previous administration have reversed the gains made and has led to poverty incidence shooting up to 40%. The so-called EDSA III uprising last May first brought right into our television screens and

defined is knowing how these definitions can help us design poverty reduction programs for our LGUs.

Our understanding of poverty has grown over the years. In the 1960s, poverty was measured in terms of *level of income* using macro-economic indicators like GNP per head. Poverty during this time was tied to the notion of *growth* – or the lack of it – in the national economy.

In the 1970s, poverty assumed greater importance in development debates. Poverty was now related to the need to *redistribute wealth*. The concept of relative deprivation gained more prominence. *Relative deprivation* was understood as more than just the inability to meet minimum nutrition or subsistence levels but as the chronic inability to meet the standards prevailing in a particular society.

Moreover, the traditional definition of poverty as an income measure was broadened to include the “*basic needs*” concept. The concept covered not

Poverty is the chronic inability to meet basic needs

only those needs that were provided by households or individuals but also those that were socially provided like education and health.

The introduction of the basic needs concept redefined poverty to cover not just the shortage of income but the *lack of access to health, education, and other social services*.

The 1980s added new, non-monetary, qualitative dimensions to the poverty.

Robert Chambers’ work led to the understanding of poverty as *powerlessness and isolation*, thereby introducing the need for *participation* of the poor in political and economic processes.

Interest in vulnerability and its opposite, security, grew, as more researchers understood how seasonality affected the economic activities of the poor; how shocks like drought, typhoons, floods, and wars affect their way of life; and more importantly, how the poor used assets to protect themselves or to

cope with these shocks. Studies were made on the different types of poor households, different types of assets (social, physical, financial, human, household) and the ways these assets were accumulated, replenished, or depleted as the poor underwent crises.

Poverty was closely linked to *livelihood*, giving rise to the notion of sustainable livelihoods for the poor.

Finally, increasing studies on gender during this decade revealed how poverty exerted its impact on different members of the household. Initially, gender studies focused on women alone (the Women in Development (WID) framework) but expanded to include relations between men and women or Gender and Development (GAD).

The 1990s saw further refinement in the definition of poverty. Poverty was attached to the concept of well-being, and more importance was given to how the poor viewed their situation. Thus, the decade saw the increasing number of poverty self-rating surveys being done.

The poor's perception of their condition are important.

In the developed countries of the world, the notion of social exclusion was introduced to capture not only the reality of multiple deprivation but also the process of how it occurred.

Finally, within this decade, the UNDP formulated its Human Development Index, initially starting with indicators like literacy, infant and maternal mortality rates, and income.