Developing a Complementary Poverty Monitoring Approach in Tigray, Ethiopia

Monitoring Complex Development:
Trajectories of change in 'exemplar' households and communities

Presentation Outline

- How does this fit with our topic?

- Context – Why was the 'CPMA' commissioned?

- Process of developing the CPMA

- Approach/design

- Key findings and outputs

- Possible way forward: in Tigray and beyond

- Challenges

- Lessons learned for us here

M&E-ing Complex Development

- Complexity-informed design

- Whether and what change over long term for 'exemplar' households and communities ('trajectories of dynamic open complex social systems') in selected woredas of Tigray

- Why change - Cross-cutting, no focus on specific program/'logic' (context-specific causal factors ➔ 'contingent' trajectories)

Why was this commissioned?

- Initially: IA's desire to strengthen evidence basis for poverty reduction policy dialogue (BS program in Tigray: 'aid effectiveness on the ground')

- Eventually: Buy-in from regional/woreda officials ➔ 'Integration of Complementary Poverty Monitoring Approach in Regional M&E system'

- Throughout - Objectives:
  - Beyond assessment of pre-determined expected results from government initiatives
  - Complement existing quantitative approach (lack of explanation)
  - 'Drill down' to local levels (integrated community-household approach)

Process: Developing the CPMA

- Inclusive, flexible and process-oriented, balance between opportunistic and systematic

- Agreed 'overall themes' (livelihood security, health as secondary topic, gender finally not taken up)

- Several 'reflection points' to jointly decide about next steps/priorities

- Piloting tools and reviewing them at the same time as reflecting on findings

- Accounting for resource constraints (financial, time, capacity)

- Attention to existing regional M&E system

Design/piloting of CPMA

- Case-based, protocol-guided approach linking quantitative and qualitative indicators and data

- Purposive criteria to select 'exemplars' as cases
  - Communities: food insecure; more/less 'integrated'
  - Households: food security, gender/composition, shocks

- First step = 'all-round' baseline profiles of communities and households – Basis for:
  - Change tracking through repeat profile-making over time (profile protocols)
  - Identifying specific issues worth further in-depth investigation (issue-specific protocols)

Design/piloting of CPMA (2)

- 'Profile' protocols significantly revised after 1st round (community: better linked to existing data – household: focus on issues not captured by FGDs community level)

- Issue identified around 'credit & shocks' and effect on households

- Design of 'credit & shocks' protocol, administered to selected households in 'profiled' communities

- Analysis of existing regional M&E system and identification of 'entry points' to integrate CPMA

Key outputs & findings

- 4 'all round' community profiles in 2 woredas in Tigray

- Analysis of 41 'all round' household profiles: most novel in regional/woreda officials' views

- Analysis of existing regional M&E system and suggestions for integration of CPMA

- Several participatory workshops reflecting on joint fieldwork process, products, findings, policy implications and integration issues

- Field report on "credit & shocks" (51 households)

- Draft policy brief on "Food security and credit: Implications of livestock and human deaths and chronic illness" – also aimed at Federal level

Key outputs and findings

- Household profiles: innovative, distinctive

- Focus on households' strategies (not narrow sectoral view) (e.g. both very rich and very poor households depend more on non-/off-farm activities of various kinds)

- Understand constraints and opportunities for different types of households (gender, composition/labour force, wealth, on/off track, "entrepreneurial spirit")

- Pick up information on sensitive/difficult topics (social shocks e.g. divorce, maternal mortality) and effects on household vulnerability

- Community profiles: Important to locate different households and broader (yet local) structural issues affecting them (e.g. better/poor access to markets)

- Profiles = bases for monitoring change over time

Key outputs and findings (2)

- Pick up important issues in very short time. E.g. decision to focus on "credit & shocks"

- Policy relevant findings ➔
    - Questions about types/sizes of loans and activities appropriate for vulnerable households
    - Relevance/feasibility of mechanisms insuring households against adverse shock effects (e.g. cancelling loan repayment when death)
    - Necessity of strengthening provision of "mainstream services" linked to credit-promoted options (e.g. veterinary services when loans for livestock production)

Possible way forward in Tigray

- High level consultative workshop ➔ Agreed on relevance of integrating CPMA in Regional M&E system

- Regional Finance/Planning to develop integration process (procedures, scope, timetable, responsibilities, resources)

- Examples of issues to agree upon:

  - How fast to expand and what first (repeat monitoring vs issue-specific protocols; keep community & household levels vs focus on household level etc.)

  - How will themes/issues be identified (issue-specific protocols: emanating from profiles vs sectoral/program concerns)

  - Balancing non-programmatic approach and responsiveness to major Government (donor-supported) programmes

Possible way forward in Tigray (2)

- **More questions**
  - Who will do what, capacities required (further develop approach, manage data, analyse findings, draw policy implications etc.)
  - How can capacity be provided sustainably (e.g. link with Mekele University, call down contract for sociologist?)
  - Role/responsibilities of woredas?

- **Recommendation to IA: Early support to Regional Government to develop integration 'road map'**

Challenges (1)

- Understanding 'exemplar' case-based approach?
  - Policy relevance not linked to number of cases but careful selection of 'exemplars' – no familiarity with this

- Realist expectations about 'integration'
  - What CPMA can do: raise issues for further investigation and policy dialogue
  - What it cannot do: 'mainstream qualitative indicators'... for all woredas etc.

- Commitment on IA's side to establish something long term?
  - Addis team's commitment to Tigray?
  - Incentive of IA Tigray team = 'get it done'?
  - Sector interests; short-term investment of staff in IA
  - No-one to work closely with consultant and take over

Challenges (2)

- On the regional government's side:
  - Baseline/repeat profile-making seen as less policy relevant because of longer timeframe required
  - Temptation: shift back to 'supply-driven' investigation rather than 'grounded in community/household reality'
  - Reluctance to discuss sensitive policy issues and be involved in anything critical
  - Limited capacity
- Focus on household level:
  - Most novel but also most demanding
  - Various constraints ➔ Not 'done well' in pilot (too few, selection bias, difficult to write in allowed time)
  - Risk: capacity requirements too high, won't be repeated

Possible way forward beyond Tigray?

- Replicating/adapting approach in other Regions?

- Adapting approach to complement existing country-wide M&E systems for large-scale multi-donor programs (PBS, FSP)?

- Institutionalize channels for inputs from such approaches to feed into federal policymaking?

  - Tried with policy brief

  - General attitude of Ethiopian government officials: Defensive when confronted to policy challenge

  - Nature of Regional/Federal relationship may make this more sensitive

  - Donor interest/commitment?

Lessons learned for us here

- Value added of case-based, protocol-guided approach drilling down to local levels

  - Wider policy relevance of findings based on exemplars

  - Shortcut to identify and explore constraints in depth ➔ "outside of box" thinking and solutions

- Less evident yet 'intuitively' clear: Value added of longitudinal approach tracking change against baselines in a fairly open-ended manner   **BUT**

- Requirements re: resources are large (though not clear if larger than existing approach!)

- Little incentive in donor/government agencies to consider methods requiring long timeframe (like baseline/repeat profile, open-ended change tracking)

- And handling "real" policy findings is not easy