

The Four Dimensional Poverty Assessment in Tharparkar (Pakistan)

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Abstract:

The study investigates the intensity of absolute poverty existence in district Tharparkar, Tehsil Islamkot, Sindh Pakistan. Existence of extreme poverty in the region attracts enormous organizations and research institutions on poverty to help the vulnerable people and provide the basic needs of life. Likely this research is based on four dimensions of absolute poverty i-e Food and nutrition security (Consumption, Access stability & nutritional quality), Domestic water supply (Quality, access, availability), Education (Quality, availability & access) and Gender and social equality (access to education, access to health, social equality). Further the methodology that has been incorporated in study comprised of structured questionnaire with translation to National language in order make sure better understanding of questions, questionnaire then reviewed by poverty experts to exclude discrepancies. Research site was Tehsil Islamkot, 16 to 30 villages were selected and 30 household per village were targeted. Findings of the study reveal alarming living conditions of the people. Findings of the study also imply to people going through lack of access to food and nutrition, clean drinking water, health and education. Moreover local people tend to have more grievances and less confidence on provincial government as the area has completely been ignored after severe drought and extreme poverty.

Key words: Tharparkar, Poverty, Four Dimensional Poverty, Deprivation, Drought, Food and Nutrition, Domestic Water Supply.

Introduction to District Tharparkar

The Tharparkar district derives its name from Thar and Parker. The name Thar is from Thul, the general term for the region sand ridges and Parker literary means "to cross over". It was earlier known as Thar and Parker district, but later became one word Tharparkar. Tharparkar District is one of twenty three districts of Sindh province in Pakistan. Its headquarter is at Mithi. It has the lowest Human Development Index of all districts in Sindh and comprises of a total area of 19,638 sq km (7,582 sq mi). Population of this area, as estimated by the 1998 census, is 955,812 people. But it is interesting to note that during the last 15 years there has been an exponential growth with the increase in population around 10 folds than the 1998 estimate. New villages (or commonly known as Goths) have sprouted near big establishments such as Umarkot and Mithi and other areas as well.

Climate

Tharparkar has a tropical desert climate where the days are extremely hot and nights remarkably cold. On any given day the temperature can easily reach 28 oC at day and 9 oC at night. Despite this Tharparkar is still the only fertile desert of the world. The hills on the edge of Rann Kutch consist of granite and crystalline rocks of Aravalli Range that belongs to Archean system part of the oldest rocks of the earth's crust.

The climate of Tharparkar is characterized by comparatively limited seasonal precipitation with erratic distribution; annual evapotranspiration is above the annual precipitation, high atmospheric temperatures with large diurnal and seasonal variation, intense solar radiation and strong wind regime. The local climatic situation is mainly influenced by the monsoon, which depends on the movements of intertropical convergence zone.

Culture

Tharparkar is a heterogeneous society in terms of religion and culture. The area is a symbol of religious harmony as both Hindu and Muslim population living as one community. The tribes and castes in Tharparkar adopt multicolored settlement pattern rather than regional segregation. Successive waves of invasion have therefore created a variety of cultures and ethnic groups in Thar. But all have, in time, bowed to similar means of production and to a common material culture. The tharies are honest, hard-working people and are very generous in hospitality. The gatherings between castes are largely restricted to men. The locale for such interactions being the “autak”, each hamlet will have at least one “autak” situated a separate distance beyond the thorn hedge of the family accommodations. Failing an “autak” the nearest shady tree is designated for meetings with outsiders. Women largely communicate within their own caste, within which they marry exclusively. Opportunities for meeting women of other castes become more restricted with higher status. Rajput women observe strict purdah (Seclusion) while poorer Bajeer, Bheel, Menghwar and Kohli are freer to undertake their field tasks.

Potential in Resources

Tharparkar is rich in minerals, the coal deposits of the district is one of the largest coal deposits of the world spread over 9000 square kms. Other major mineral include granite, china clay and salt. Presently there is no industry in the whole district although it has large potential with reference to its geographical position and natural resources. The area is poor in agriculture as it completely depends on rain water. (Rahma Islamic Relief Feb 2015).

Thar Mining and Power Project

The Thar coal field has total lignite reserves of 175 Billion tons which can be utilized to produce 100,000 MW for over 200 years. Given the large energy deficit and the lack of any reliable and sustainable local energy resources in the country, the Thar Coal Mining project presents a wonderful growth opportunity. The reliability of this energy resource and potential of the project make it one of the most suitable and sustainable growth schemes to end the energy crisis and bring energy security to the country.

The first concern countered by the WB team was the fear of local people whether Thar and Sindh will actually benefit from the exploitation of the world's largest resource of energy. An estimated over 175 billion tons of proven reserves of good quality coal is spread over 9,000 square kilometers of the Thar Desert. Compare it with the figures of India's total coal deposits of 140 billion tons. Yet, for 40 years, these reserves have remained untapped. People in Thar live in sub-human conditions and remain deprived of even access to safe drinking water, sewerage, healthcare, transport and education. Other issues include bonded labor and violation of the fundamental rights to employment and access to food availability. Thar coal expert Syed Mohibullah Shah is of the view that technology exists to produce potable water from coal while the mineral is utilized for power generation. Thar coal has very large water content that is capable of providing an abundant water supply for the locals. People of the area said that the country is under severe electricity and energy crisis and Sindh is ready to cater the needs but ask as to who will guarantee the protection of the rights of the local people. The community is of the view that it should be the first beneficiary of any coal project. It is ensured that over 200,000 jobs flowing from it over the years and locals will be the first priority of recruitment.

Environmental Impacts

As coal is still the cheapest fuel in the world and affordable to the poor but the coal-based energy projects are being discouraged for they release vast amounts of gas emissions into the atmosphere. According to World Bank the Thar Coal Project is not environment friendly, it has negative environment impacts. Because the World Bank perhaps, has become cautious after facing worldwide condemnation for extending a \$3.75 billion loan to South Africa in April to build one of the world's largest coal plant. Instead, it said, these financial resources can more effectively be used to address the energy shortfalls in the near-term in an environmentally sustainable manner such as extension of the Tarbela Hydropower Project. Thar Coal Project would hurt the environment by putting out 25 million tons of carbon dioxide a year. In Pakistan, the World Bank's decision not to finance the Thar coal project apparently for environmental reasons. (World Bank and Thar Project June 2014).

Women in Development

Women always and all the way around the world are oppressed it is a natural phenomenon of the world. They are the victims of political and social exclusion and injustice. They always do struggles to get their rights but all in vain. Likely the women of Tharparkar are more than oppressed. During a seminar of 'Women Development of Tharparkar' asked women if they would want to be woman in the next life, they replied with a noisy big 'No'. They have many reasons to be unhappy with their gender, mostly unequal division of labor between men and women. "A woman work never gets done" one women added. She has to work at fields and at home as well, she has to fetch water from dug wells whatever the case may be. Women are compelled to do manual work even while pregnant; they have

no time to take deep breath and to take care of themselves. As Tharparkar faces drought issues, of the population of 1.5 Million women are bearing this disaster. (Sustainable Development Policy Institute SDPI).

Women of Tharparkar not only have to look after their children and household activities but they are forced to fill labor gap caused by men migrated to urban in search of job. (NGO, Society for Conservation and Protection of Environment, SCOPE).

With their husbands gone, women must also tend to the livestock, fetch water from distant sources when their household wells run dry, care for the elderly, and keep up the tradition of subsistence farming. There a lack of empowerment amongst the Tharparkar women, during a workshop on women empowerment in the region, women suggested conducting workshops for our men and teach them to treat us well, we (women) cannot make our men understand to be fair with us the reason being it is against our culture and tradition. (Area Reporter, Abdul Ghani).

Dimensions of Poverty in Tharkparkar

This research unveils four dimensions of poverty in Tehsil Islamkot, District Tharparkar, and Sindh Province. These dimensions are followings

- Food and nutrition security (Consumption, Access stability & nutritional quality)
- Domestic water supply (Quality, access, availability)
- Education (Quality, availability & access)
- Gender and social equality (access to education, access to health, social equality)

Objective of study

The main objectives of the study are to find out the volume and nature of absolute poverty and its causes and effects on

different genders and age groups, to produce reliable and valid estimate of poverty and absolute poverty at household levels and availability and utilization of natural and human resources in the target area and how these can be used to reduce poverty pressure on communities and finally to find out the best possible solutions that may contribute to minimize the intensity of poverty in district Tharparkar Sindh.

The findings of poverty measurement would be based on the data collected at household's level upon internationally agreed definitions of poverty and the solution would be based on the available factors of production, resource mobilization possibilities, economic trends, community expertise and cost effectiveness.

Methodology

The research consists of household structured questionnaire. Professional services acquired to translate the household questionnaire into local language to make easier to understand for community as well enumerators. The project worked with professional translator to clarify the meanings and context of questions. The training material was also translated into Urdu and the questionnaire was adopted from MPAT handbook.

Field Testing

After translating the training material and survey questioners it was thoroughly reviewed by the language and poverty experts and discrepancies and errors were removed. After this the tools were tested in field to address the understandings of communities and then errors were removed.

Sampling

Standardized 16-30 x 30 sampling approach (16 to 30 villages and 30 households per village) was employed, using a geographically stratified approach to ensure a random sample,

acceptable minimum sample size (i.e. the number of households to be surveyed) and good geographical coverage.

Results

Poverty measurement:

According to UN (1995) "a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to social services."

As per the above definition we further categorize the indicators as follows.

Deprivation level:

In order to measure absolute poverty amongst different age groups it requires to have defined the measures to find out the severe deprivation with respect to:

- Food and nutrition security
- Domestic water supply
- Education
- Gender and social equality

Color coding on the basis of aggregate scores:

Score (80-100)	No Deprivation
Score (60-80-)	Mild Deprivation
Score (30-60)	Moderate Deprivation
Score (0-30)	Extreme Deprivation
Missing Data MD	

Demographics Information

General Information

Max/Min

Number of households surveyed	850	
Average survey time (minutes)	#DIV/0!	[0,0]
Average respondent's age (years)	46	[17,84]
Average head of HH age (years)	47	[18,84]

Gender Statistics

Gender Statistics	Total	%
Male	630	74%
Female	220	29%
Male headed HHs	780	93%
Female headed HHs	70	8%
Male-Female headed HHs	0	0%

Headed HHs Marital Status	Total
Married	776
Single	29
Divorced	2
Widowed	43

Scores across all villages:

Food and Nutrition Security

Food and Nutrition Security	Average	Min/Max
Consumption	61.2	10.0-100.0
Access Stability	55.8	10.0-100.0
Nutrition Quality	40.2	10.8-79.0

In response to question of how did any member of your household have had taken lesser food then required? So more or less 40% respondents replied with variation in time duration, some of them faced the situation for entire year, some said they were short of food for more than a month, some complained for not having enough food for few weeks while some said such situation happens twice a year.

Tharparkar is one the most food insecure districts of Sindh province. The district consists of widely scattered desert terrain, barren tracts of sand dunes covered with thorny shrubs. Poor quality and access to food and nutrition has been created alarming situation in the area. Arid land becomes infertile if there is no rain, hence there is no food/agriculture production in that situation ultimately population as well as cattle suffer badly in that kind of Situation. Press/Media has put a spotlight to unveil the situation and its consequences.

Domestic Water Supply

Domestic Water Supply	Average	Min/Max
Quality	49.3	13.5-84.3
Availability	75.5	10.0-80
Access	43.5	10.0-100.0

Tharparkar has been the focal point in terms of clean water shortage, number of Non-profit Organizations has been seen to work on sanitation and hygiene in district. Water used by inhabitants contains a high content of various salts and metals, which pose a threat to human and animal health (WHO/UNICEF, 2013). As Tharparkar's water contains a high content of fluoride leads to serious chronic dental and skeleton diseases (Reported by the UN information unit). Large number of inhabitants are deprived of access to clean drinking water, none of the household has available water facilities (well, tube well) at home this is the reason ladies have make long walk in order to pitch water from water sources located at a distance of miles.

Education

Education	Average	Min/Max
Quality	43.9	9.6-72.7
Availability	66.9	32.5-100
Access	35.5	10.0-50

Education is as important as food to live healthy life, unfortunately district Tharparkar has been seen intensively backward in terms of education. A small portion of population i.e 2% - 3% complete higher education. Education system in terms of infrastructure and staff availability has remained poor. As from the above results show the quality and accessibility vary between 35 to 43% which is alarming. Teachers are not punctual at duty that leads to more students' absenteeism and subsequently students' high turnover.

Gender and Social Equality

Gender and Social Equality	Average	Min/Max
Access to Education	35.5	10.0-50
Access to Health Facilities	47.8	10.0-60
Social Equality	80.6	25.0-100.0

Health care centers of district are lack of physicians, technical staff. The main district headquarters hospital has only one male doctor, who is a child pediatrician. There is no surgeon in any government medical facility in the whole district. No secondary health facilities are available either. Positions of doctors are vacant in District Tharparkar; dozens of posts including Para medical staff are lying vacant. Sindh government has completely ignored district Tharparkar. Nevertheless despite the fact of high deprivation and lack of resources and facilities people of different faiths and believes live all together with peace and harmony, respecting social and traditional values, participating in one another's customs and traditions.

CONCLUSION

District Tharparkar has been confronted with socio-economic problems for quite a long while, the district has seen as focal point of International and local media to be exposed for its extreme condition of poverty. People are in situation of extreme deprivation of basic necessities of life which in turn led the different international and local non-profit organization to put hands together in order to consider the provision of basic needs of life. The reasons for extreme condition may be many including geographical location, local culture that is the key constraint for women in particular, social, political and economic exclusion from the mainstream of a society. The local inhabitants do bear number of grievances from the provincial government for complete ignorance.

Furthermore the district has been backward in terms of low literacy ratio, lower health facilities which in turn resulted in high infant mortality rate and poor nutrition is one the attributes of the area. Provincial government should address the issue considering people's grievances. Further this publication intends to highlight issue, informing both policy and development planners for effective development intervention in a desert specific and drought affected area.

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