

## **Poverty, Food Security and Infrastructure**

### **Rural poverty analysis: A case study of Kaski District of Nepal**

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Although rural development is the main focus of the National Development Plan of Nepal, there are no objective methods of ranking small administrative areas, known as Village Development Committees (VDCs) in Nepal, in order to allocate development resources to the neediest. Several poverty measurement methods are available, but commonly used methods are difficult to apply at the VDC level due to data limitations.

Available poverty measurement methods can be divided into three types: non-normative, semi-normative and normative. Non-normative methods use a fraction of per capita income for the poverty threshold. Some European countries use this technique. Semi-normative methods use social and economic aspects. The notion behind a semi-normative method is that increased income cannot ensure a better quality of life for people. The Physical Quality of Life Index and the Human Development Index are the examples of such methods. Normative methods apply a threshold that is derived on the basis of the notion of a minimum living standard that includes food, shelter and other household necessities. In this research a method has been devised which falls within the semi-normative type and is applied to the Kaski district of Nepal as a case study.

Kaski district is a typical mid-hill district with mixed income and development levels. The VDC is the unit of analysis for this study. Variables were selected through a series of meetings including local planning officials and people's representatives. Most of the socioeconomic data for the selected variables were collected from the District Development Committee and its line agencies. Natural resources data were extracted from the Land Resources Mapping Project Data, using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). From the available variables and their data, five indices were designed: the poverty index, the social index, the women's empowerment index, the infrastructure and institutional index, and the natural resource index. The poverty index was designed as a proxy for income poverty. These indices were frequently used in development planning at the local level. A simple correlation test was

applied between income data and the indices and also among the indices themselves. The indices were mapped in GIS.

In the analysis, the correlation between income data and the poverty index was statistically significant. However, there was no significant correlation between income and other indices. The first result showed that income poverty could be reflected by that index in rural areas. However, the second result suggested two possibilities: 1) income data could not fully represent all relevant social aspects, or 2) resources did not go to the neediest people.

Regarding GIS maps depicting indices and indicators, local planners and policy makers can easily understand them. Through these maps, concerned planners and policy makers can compare the situation of their VDC with other VDCs in terms of a given index. This knowledge offers them power to bargain for more resources with higher authorities.