

# DRAFT REPORT

## THE ASSESSMENT OF POVERTY IN ST LUCIA

### VOLUME IV

## THE PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT OF POVERTY IN ST. LUCIA (VOICES OF THE POOR)

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IN ST LUCIA

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## **ACRONYMS**

ACP	-	Africa, Caribbean and Pacific
BNTF	-	Basic Needs Trust Fund
CARE	-	Centre for Adolescent Rehabilitation and Education
CARICOM	-	Caribbean Community
CBI	-	Caribbean Basin Initiative
CBO(s)	-	Community Based Organisation(s)
CDB	-	Caribbean Development Bank
CET	-	Common External Tariff
CFCs	-	Chlorofluorocarbons
CIDA	-	Canadian International Development Agency
CRED	-	Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters
CSME	-	Caribbean Single Market and Economy
DFID	-	UK Department of International Development
DOTS	-	
EC	-	Eastern Caribbean
EC	-	European Commission
ECTEL	-	Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority
EDF	-	European Development Fund
EIB	-	European Investment Bank
EM-DAT	-	Emergency Disasters Data Base
EU	-	European Union
FAO	-	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FGT	-	Foster-Greer-Thorbecke
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
GOSL	-	Government of St Lucia
HIV/AIDS	-	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HDI	-	Human Development Index
HBS	-	Household Budgetary Survey
IBRD	-	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICC	-	International Cricket Council
IDB	-	Inter-American Development Bank
ILO	-	International Labour Organisation
LUCELEC	-	St. Lucia Electricity Services Ltd
MDGs	-	Millennium Development Goals
MoSSaiC	-	Management of Slope Stability in Communities
NAFTA	-	North American Free Trade Area
NAT	-	National Assistance Team

NELP	-	National Learning and Enrichment Programme
NGO(s)	-	Non-Government Organisation(s)
NIC	-	National Insurance Corporation
OECD	-	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OECS	-	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
OFDA	-	USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance
OPSR	-	Office of Private Sector Relations
PPA	-	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRF	-	Poverty Reduction Fund
PROUD	-	Programme for the Rationalisation of Unplanned Developments
PSIP	-	Public Sector Investment Programme
PWDs	-	Persons with Disabilities
RC	-	Roman Catholics
REDIP	-	Rural Economic Diversification Incentives Project
SEDU	-	Small Enterprise Development Unit
SFA	-	Special Framework of Assistance
SIDS	-	Small Island Developing State(s)
SLBC	-	St Lucia Banana Corporation
SLBGA	-	St Lucia Banana Growers Association
SMEs	-	Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
SPICES	-	
SLC	-	Survey of Living Conditions
SLADA	-	St. Lucia Agricultural Diversification Agency Ltd
SLBGA	-	St. Lucia Banana Growers Association
TFRs	-	Total Fertility Rates
TRP	-	Textbook Rental Programme
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
UNECLAC	-	United Nations Economic Commission in Latin America and the Caribbean
UNESCO	-	United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIFEM	-	United Nations' Development Fund for Women
UNODC	-	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
VAT	-	Value Added Tax
WIAP	-	Windward Islands Action Plan
WIBDECO	-	Windward Islands Banana Development and Exporting Company
WINBAN	-	Windward Islands Banana Grower's Association
WTO	-	World Trade Organisation

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

---

Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) are now seen as an essential component of any research to determine the type and level of poverty and deprivation in a country. The PPA conducted in St Lucia strengthened the poverty assessment process by broadening stakeholder involvement, generating a large amount of qualitative data to complement the quantitative data produced by the Survey of Living Conditions (SLC)/Household Budgetary Survey (HBS), enriching the analysis, and deepening understanding of poverty from the perspective of the poor.

It provided opportunities for individuals and groups in the communities selected for study to articulate and share their perceptions and experience of poverty and deprivation, to reflect on and analyse the conditions under which they live, and to identify the strategies that they use to sustain their livelihoods and to articulate their concerns, needs and priorities. It has also provided insights into the effects and impact of poverty on poor individuals, households and groups living in the seventeen communities studied.

### **1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE PPA**

The general objectives of the PPA were to:

1. Generate a variety of data, but especially qualitative data, at the micro level on the type, nature and distribution of poverty and deprivation in the seventeen selected poor communities.
2. Give deeper meaning to the quantitative data generated by the SLC/HBS and to the data collected in the Institutional Assessment.

More specifically, the Assessment was meant to:

1. Collect concrete and specific data on living conditions in selected poor communities in order to produce a multi-dimensional view of poverty and deprivation, its distribution and the factors that contribute its existence;
2. Increase understanding of poverty and deprivation based on the perceptions and experience of individuals, of households, and of different groups in these communities;
3. Identify the vulnerability and risks faced by poor individuals and households as they strive to sustain their livelihoods;
4. Identify assets and resources, including natural resources, to which poor individuals, households and groups have access;
5. Obtain information from individuals, groups and households about:
  - a. The initiatives that they take to sustain their livelihoods,
  - b. The public services and facilities that are available to them and the constraints and obstacles that they encounter in their attempts to access these,
  - c. Their concerns, needs and priorities, and

- d. The interventions and actions that in their view are needed in order to improve their living conditions and to alleviate and reduce poverty and deprivation; and
6. To generate data that can be used to formulate policies that are informed by the voices of the poor.

## 1.2 COMPONENTS OF THE PPA

The PPA was comprised of four main components, in each of which a number of separate but related activities were undertaken. Figure 1.1 shows the key components and activities undertaken as part of the assessment.

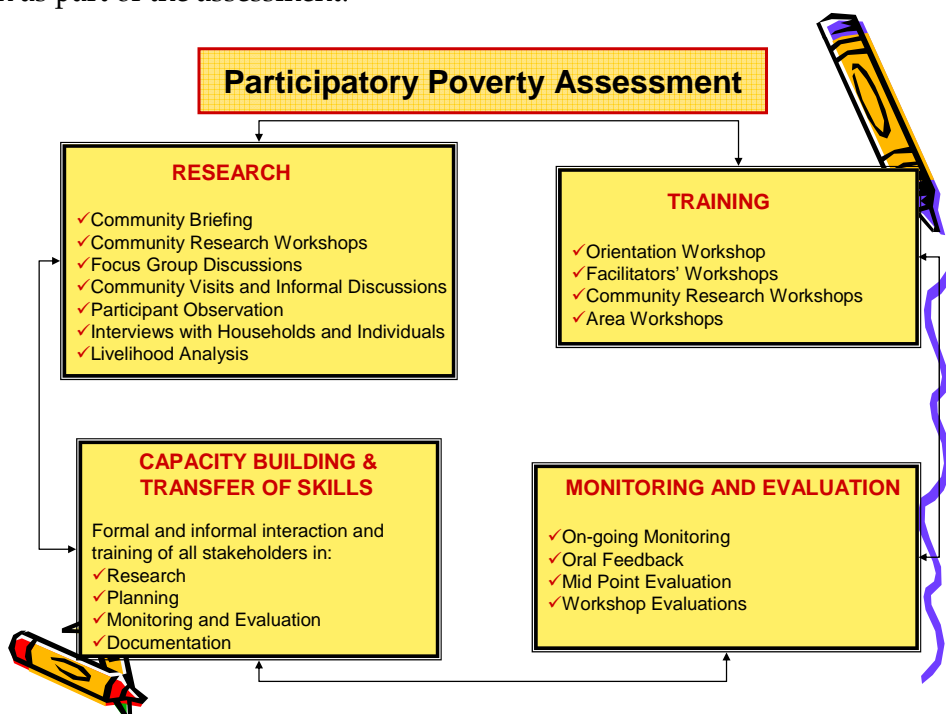


FIGURE 1.1: COMPONENTS OF THE PPA

### 1.2.1 Research

The Research Component was undertaken to:

1. Generate specific and concrete qualitative as well as quantitative data on living conditions in the selected poor communities;
2. Obtain information from individuals, households and groups in the communities on their perceptions, experience, views, and opinions about poverty and deprivation; and
3. Identify factors that contribute to poverty and deprivation in these communities

In order to achieve these objectives documentary and field research were undertaken. Among the documents reviewed and whose content was analysed were some on the international literature on PPAs, and policy documents and reports on poverty research and poverty reduction initiatives in the Region. The field research yielded a large quantity of empirical data which were obtained through observation, questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, environmental assessments, and community workshops.

### **1.2.2 Training**

Effective use of participatory research methods to conduct PPAs depends on the availability of individuals who are knowledgeable about and understand the philosophy and principles of Participatory Methodologies, who have some degree of skill in using participatory research methods and techniques, and who can operate as members of a team.

In order to ensure that all of the stakeholders, and especially the Field Research Facilitators were well prepared and equipped to undertake and successfully complete the PPA, training was an important and on-going activity. A Participatory Training Methodology was used to conduct a series of training workshops that included an initial three day workshop designed to expose Field Research Facilitators and other stakeholders to the philosophy and principles of the Participatory Methodology and to provide opportunities for them to practice and to gain hands-on experience in using participatory research methods and techniques.

Field Research Facilitators also participated in two evaluation workshops. In addition community residents who participated in the community workshops were became involved in training activities designed to help them to acquire skills in using various research methods and techniques to generate information about themselves and their communities, to analyse and interpret this information and to use it to produce a realistic picture of living conditions and life in their communities.

### **1.2.3 Capacity Building and Transfer of Skills**

An important goal of the Assessment of Living Conditions was to transfer skills and to build the capacity of institutions, organisations, groups and individuals so that they would be able to undertake PPAs in the future.

Within the PPA, directly through training workshops and indirectly through informal interaction and communication, deliberate attempts were made to transfer knowledge and skills to the Field Research Facilitators as well as to other members of staff of the Ministry of Social Transformation and other Ministries, and to other organisations represented on the PPA Sub-Committee. Steps were also taken to assist them to acquire additional, new and specific skills needed to conduct PPAs. As a result there is now a group of persons in the Community Development Department of the Ministry of Social Transformation and a small number in other Ministries and organisations who are well equipped and whom can be called upon to undertake a PPA.

## **1.2.4 Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation were ongoing throughout. The Coordinator monitored progress of the field work on a weekly basis through contact with the Field Research Facilitators, and the Consultants also monitored progress through their contact with the Coordinator and with the Research Facilitators. In addition, the Consultants made several visits to each of the communities, interacted with community members, conducted interviews with heads of households and community leaders and were present at some of the community workshops.

The workshop that followed the implementation of a “Pilot” in four of the communities provided opportunities to evaluate the work done in those communities, to reflect on the process and outcomes, to identify the challenges and problems faced, to explore possible solutions, to make changes as necessary and to agree on a plan for implementation in the remaining communities.

Prior to the final evaluation workshop Field Research Facilitators were asked to complete a questionnaire designed to encourage reflection on the PPA its outcomes, effect and impact as well as on their experience of being involved in the process. They then participated in a one and a half day evaluation workshop in which they identified specific outcomes, discussed the effect and impact that the PPA has had on them, on other individuals, groups and communities, and they identified some of the lessons they had learnt.

## **1.3 METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS**

The Participatory Research Approach and Methodology was used to engage people in the seventeen selected communities, local research facilitators, members of the National Assistance Team (NAT), and the Consultants in the activities that were undertaken in the PPA. Teams of local Field Research Facilitators and some members of the NAT were trained in the use of the participatory research methods and techniques that were used to collect and generate large amounts of mostly qualitative data.

Using a participatory, experiential learning model, a number of training workshops were conducted to engage some members of the NAT and the Field Research Facilitators in a process of reflection and analysis of their perceptions of and experience of poverty and deprivation, to expose them to the theory and practice of participatory research, and to involve them in practical, hands on exercises through which they obtained and sharpened their skills in using a variety of data collecting instruments.

Workshops were also conducted in all of the communities. They not only served as a mechanism to obtain specific information from community residents about life in their communities, but it exposed them to training in the use of participatory research methods and techniques, and provided opportunities for them to acquire skills in data collection, analysis and interpretation of the information that they provided about their communities.

Participatory research methods and techniques, including some innovative and creative tools, were used to ensure active participation of community members in providing and generating empirical qualitative as well as quantitative data about their communities. (See details in Appendix 1). Face-to-face interaction and on-going dialogue with the key informants was also a key element of the data collection process.

## **1.4 THE KEY INFORMANTS**

Information was collected from communities, households, groups and individuals.

### **1.4.1 The Communities**

Data from the last census, information from key government ministries and NGOs working in the communities, and from written reports and other documents were used to select seventeen communities in which the PPA was carried out. The information obtained from documents, along with those obtained from informal discussion with government officials and representatives of NGOS were used to develop profiles of each of the communities selected for study.

A list of characteristics and criteria was developed and a purposive sampling technique was used to select twelve communities that were representative in terms of location, demography, social milieu, and economic activity, as well as in the distribution and various types and degree of poverty and deprivation in the country. In addition, five communities that were surveyed in the 1995 Assessment were also selected in order to identify whether and/or the extent to which there had been any changes in population, living conditions, and quality of life over the last ten years.

While all of the communities selected for study exhibit some degree of poverty and deprivation, and share a number of characteristics, they were not homogeneous, and therefore they did not experience or feel the effects of these phenomena in the same way. The community workshops served as mechanisms to obtain specific information from community residents about life in their communities, and provided opportunities for them to acquire skills in data collection, analysis and interpretation of the information that they had provided about their communities.

### **1.4.2 The Households**

Because poverty and deprivation are felt most keenly in households, information was collected from three to five households in each of the seventeen communities. In selecting the households to be interviewed, care was taken to include households of different types and that displayed different levels of poverty. Using a set of specific criteria, Field Research Facilitators used a combination of random and purposive sampling to identify households, and participants in the community workshops used a Wealth Ranking Indicators Matrix to identify households that were experiencing different levels of poverty. Questionnaires were administered to fifty four (954) households.

The completed questionnaires provided information about household members and their living conditions, about household assets and resources, and about the household economy and about household needs. They provided also information about and insights into people's perceptions, and experiences of poverty and deprivation, identified factors that contribute to the conditions within which they live, and indicated support networks and strategies that members of the household used to survive and sustain their livelihoods. In addition, the questionnaire generated information on social and gender relations, and on the gender division of labour within the households.

### **1.4.3 Individuals**

In depth interviews were conducted and information collected from a number of individuals in some of the communities. A set of criteria (see appendix) were developed and used as the basis of a purposive sampling technique to select individuals who were experiencing extreme poverty. Among those selected were "the hidden poor", the destitute, and elderly persons living in poverty.

Community leaders/individuals with influence in each community were identified by the Field Research facilitators and a questionnaire was used to conduct interviews with one or two of these in each community.

### **1.4.4 Groups**

Poverty and deprivation does not mean the same thing to everyone and they affect different groups in different ways. In order to capture the differences in perceptions and experience of poverty, and to identify the specific concerns, needs and priorities of different groups including the most vulnerable, focus group discussions were conducted separately with men, with women, with unemployed persons, with elderly persons and challenged individuals, and with young people under 25 years of age. In several of the communities the discussions were held with children under fifteen years old, and with youths between fifteen and twenty five years old.

During the focus group discussions each group defined and articulated their experience of poverty and deprivation, shared information about the survival strategies they used to sustain their livelihoods, and identified their particular concerns, needs and priorities. As a result there emerged various perspectives and attitudes to, and a better understanding of the experience of poverty and of the ways in which it affects people of different ages, sex, and level of education. In addition, participants also identified their coping and survival strategies and their particular concerns, needs and priorities.

## **1.5 ACCESSING QUALITATIVE INFORMATION**

The PPA was designed to focus on and identify factors that contribute to and/or perpetuate the existence of poverty and to examine key issues that emerge as a consequence of poverty and deprivation. Among these were:

1. Economic and Social Deprivation;
2. Vulnerability;
3. Availability of Assets and Access to Resources, Facilities and Support Services, including Public Services;
4. The Environment;
5. Government and Civil Society Interventions; and
6. Gender.

## **1.6 MANAGING AND IMPLEMENTING THE PPA**

The PPA was designed to facilitate and ensure the active participation of key stakeholders, including people in poor communities, representatives of government institutions and of NGOs, researchers and consultants, in the various research activities outlined above. Stakeholders worked as a team whose members were responsible for managing the PPA and for coordinating, conducting and monitoring specific activities.

The Team included:

- Members of the NAT Sub-Committee responsible for the PPA.
- Research Facilitators who were responsible for collecting and accurately recording the information provided by community residents and whose role was critical in ensuring that the data were of the required amount and quality.
- Supervisors. Four individuals were identified to serve as Supervisors to assist the Field Researchers in the field.
- Community residents who participated in focus group discussions and community workshops and provided information to questions during interviews
- The Consultants.

The PPA was conducted over a period of three months and in each community activities were carried a team of two Field Research Facilitators who acted alternately as facilitators and recorders. Because most of the Research Facilitators were Community Development Officers with combined extensive experience of working in communities few difficulties were encountered in mobilising and convincing community members to participate actively in the activities and to provide the required information. In spite of this, in some communities, especially in those that had participated in the Assessment ten years ago, several residents not only voiced their frustration and skepticism about the lack of any action resulting from their participation in similar activities, and they were sure that nothing different would happen as a result of this exercise.

*“The discussion was good, but nothing would happen, the next time that we will hear about this is when they come back next ten years with the more of the same questions”.*(Community resident).

*“This is just another one of many research activities that have been done in this community, but nothing has changed” (A resident in one of the communities that participated in the Assessment ten years ago).*

*“What has the government done with the report from the last Poverty Assessment they took 10 years ago? We don’t even know what they found. They did not use it because they did not do nothing in Migny over the years.*

Following the Pilot in four communities, lessons learnt were taken into consideration and activities implemented in the remaining communities. The Nat Sub-Committee and the Consultants provide on-going support and the Coordinator monitored progress.

### **1.6.1 Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation**

Face-to-face interaction and on-going dialogue with the key informants was a key element of the data collection process, and various methods and techniques were used to ensure the active involvement of all stakeholders in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data.

Triangulation ensured the use of a number of different data collection methods and techniques to obtain and check information from several different sources, to gain multiple perspectives of the experience and impact of poverty and deprivation and to make comparisons, for example between urban and rural poverty. Data were obtained from observation, collected through questionnaires, interviews, and in focus group discussions, and generated by community residents as they participated in the community workshops in interactive exercises, in community resource and wealth mapping, and in the use of creative tools, (see the Wheel of Well Being and Quality of Life Index in Appendix), to assess poverty and deprivation as well as sense of well being and the quality of life in their communities.

The large amount of qualitative data which were generated was analysed at various levels and by various members of the Research Team. While the Consultants were mainly responsible for this, community members who participated in the community workshops did analyse and interpret the information that they provided, and Field Research Facilitators also did some analysis and interpretation of the data in the final evaluation workshop.

Several methods and techniques were used to analyse the data that were collected. Among these were collective analysis and reflection, content analysis, causal analysis, needs analysis, trend analysis, gender analysis and comparative analysis. Subjecting the data to such rigorous analyses has helped to verify and validate their objectivity, reliability, and credibility and to ensure that they provide a sound basis for targeting beneficiaries for poverty alleviation and reduction policies and programmes.



## 2.0 THE FINDINGS

The information provided in this section of the report has emerged out of the actual lived experiences of people whose lives are characterised by poverty. Their life stories give their perspective on poverty, and describe their reality of being poor and of growing up and living in poor families and in poor communities. During the PPA they were given several opportunities to voice their feelings, discuss their problems and concerns, to identify their survival and coping strategies, and to articulate their needs. Their voices not only ring true but they provide insights into the underlying causes and factors that determine and perpetuate their impoverished circumstances, and they increase our understanding of their struggle to survive in spite of their feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness.

The data are therefore valid and reliable and they must be used as the basis for developing poverty alleviation programmes which, if they are to improve living conditions in poor communities must not be merely generic, but must be targeted to respond to and meet the specific needs of poor individuals, households, groups and communities.

### 2.1 THE COMMUNITIES

Of the 17 communities selected for study, four were urban, one was semi-urban, and 12 were rural. Five had been part of the Poverty Assessment conducted 10 years ago.

Table 2.1: Communities by Type and Population

Communities	Population		Urban	Semi-urban	Rural	Surveyed in 1995
	M	F				
Anse La Raye	645	631		*		
Anse Le Verde	91	72			*	
Balca	109	129			*	*
Barons Drive	186	151	*			*
Belmont	369	341			*	*
Belle Vue	359	366			*	
Bouton	54	47			*	*
Des Barras	218	252			*	
Desrameaux	160	171			*	
Faux-a-Chaux	140	121	*			
The Manque	358	358	*			
Migny	132	113			*	
Mon Jacques	95	118			*	
Praslin	136	144			*	
Park Estate	52	49			*	
Rosseau	???	???			*	*
Wilton Yard	33	23	*			

### 2.1.1 The Urban and Semi-Urban Communities

These communities located in and around the city of Castries and the towns of Vieux Forte and Soufriere, display “ghetto” features including poor housing and overcrowding, high levels of unemployment and several social problems including substance abuse, crime, and gang violence.

Wilton’s Yard and Faux-a-Chaux, in the city of Castries are both squatter settlements. Faux-a-Chaux is situated on reclaimed land and because of its proximity to the coast is prone to flooding. It is divided by the main road into two distinct socio-economic groups, the better off who live up the hill and the poorer group that occupies the settlement near to the waterfront. It is this latter group from whom most of the information was obtained. There are several single parent female-headed families with large numbers of children. Congestion and overcrowding are the norm in these communities. The majority of the population is young, with young males being highly visible. Migration of individuals from rural areas to Castries to seek employment contributes to transience and population shifts, and this is a matter of concern for some residents who feel that this has contributed to drug trafficking and the development of the drug trade and results in:

*“The constant harassment by the police.”*

*“The police don’t respect people property they enter your house without warrant.”*

*“When you have your chain they take you for a drug fella.”*

Most of the residents live in small one- or two-room dilapidated shacks constructed of bits of wood and/or tin situated among a network of narrow alleyways. Rotting floors, broken windows and leaking roofs are not uncommon, and private baths and toilets usually non-existent. Some residents describe the situation in the following statements:

*“The house in a bad condition, it have holes everywhere, you could stay outside and see all inside.”*

*“The roof leaking, when the rain fall the whole house getting wet.”*

*“A family of eight has to share this two-room shack.”*

Although there are public toilet and bath facilities in these communities, residents do not always have access to them. Among the reasons cited for this situation are: 1) the inability to pay the small fee required for use; 2) the hours when the facility is open and the unacceptable; and 2) the poor and abusive attitude of the Manager of the Faux-a-Chaux facility. These factors have led to indiscriminate disposal of human excreta in surrounding areas, including the waterfront opposite.

*“The toilet supposed to open from 7.00 in the morning, but 10.00 o’clock and it close.”*

*“I come from work at 1.00 and the toilet close. I was so mad”*

*“The woman side close, she say use the men side, but women need they privacy, what if I bathing and a man open there on me?”*

*“People do their thing in plastic bags and throw in the sea.”*

In these communities unemployment and under-employment are high and so is participation in the drug trade. Substance abuse, including the use of alcohol, marijuana and crack cocaine is reported to be high and there are several social problems including gang violence. Indiscipline, use of obscene language delinquency and crime, especially robbery, are major features. A significant phenomenon in Faux-a-Chaux is the number of young children between five and 14 years who are allowed to roam the streets up to as late as 10.00 and 11.00 at night.

The Mangue in Vieux Fort is an unplanned cluster settlement with widespread squatting on privately owned land. The housing stock is fairly good and about one third of the houses are concrete. Indiscriminate garbage disposal and littering are common, the one public toilet has been vandalised and there is a problem with sewage.

Unlike Faux-a-Chaux and Wilton's Yard there is minimal migration, however the majority of the population is also young and there is a great deal of interaction, characterised by sexual innuendo and communicated through "restricted codes" including expletives, among male and female young people on the block. Relationships between the youth and older people are often strained, adults use violent language when communicating with children, there is indiscipline and juvenile delinquency, and there is some evidence of child abandonment. Gang violence and crime are evident, marijuana and cocaine are widely used and there is an underground network of drug peddling. The high levels of unemployment and poverty are seen by many as justification for crime, for drug trafficking and for the use of illegal drugs.

Anse Le Raye, a small coastal fishing town, has the largest population of all the communities that were studied. Because there is little migration, the population is fairly stable, but the presence of older persons, especially men, is more noticeable. Moreover, there is a higher level of participation in community activities by older men than by any other group, and participation of young people in such activities is extremely low.

Some residents own or have access to land but there are several shanties with few amenities. Sanitation is a problem as many residents dispose of their garbage in the sea. There are sections of the communities that are prone to flooding.

Unemployment is high and there are few opportunities for employment. Some of the residents depend on fishing or vending to tourists to earn an income. Drug abuse among the youth is reportedly high, but the crime rate is low and so is the incidence of domestic violence.

Barons Drive in the town of Soufriere surveyed in the Assessment 10 years ago is a coastal community in which fishing and operation of water taxis are the main economic activities. However the fishermen pointed out that obtaining licenses to operate their boats is impossible because of the requirements and the demanding process. Housing is poor and many lack basic facilities. Overcrowding is common and unemployment is high. It is said that some young people are involved in several illegal activities including drug trafficking and use of illegal drugs.

In all of the urban communities, poor housing and overcrowded conditions, few amenities, and few opportunities for employment contribute to varying levels of poverty and a significant number of residents are very poor. The youthfulness of their populations, many of whom are unemployed, and a significant number of whom are involved either in drug trafficking and/or who use illegal drugs, contributes to violence and crime and influences both the type and quality of the relationships that exist between men and women, young and old, parents and children, and between neighbours. Absence of toilet facilities, disposal of garbage and human waste and presence of rodents and mosquitoes not only create unsanitary conditions and an unhealthy environment, but they are threats to the health of residents.

### **2.1.2 The Rural Communities**

Two of the rural communities, Bouton and Praslin are coastal communities in which fishing is an important activity. The other communities are inland, with Migny, Park Estate and Balca being somewhat isolated. Natural resources include the land, the forests, sea, beach, rivers and waterfalls. In Balca, the river is an important resource as the sand is being used for brick-making. There is also a pumice pit but residents have only limited access and no control over it.

In most of these communities, there is a great deal of land. However in many cases either owned by families, in Praslin, by private individuals in Des Barras, by private companies in Belmont and Park Estate, and by the government in Rosseau. Consequently issues of ownership and tenure create problems that often result in disputes and conflicts. Residents are of the view that land is very important, but because much of the land is unavailable, the majority of the residents have no access to it either for housing or for agriculture. However, agriculture has been and still is a common and important activity undertaken in rural communities and its contribution to the economy of households as well as to the national economy is well recognised.

*"We have land, we must look at agriculture".*

*"Agriculture is one way of making money".*

Changes in land ownership and over time and the decline of the agriculture industry have left many farmers without work and a source of income. Originally in most of these rural communities large quantities of bananas were produced, but with the decline in the banana industry large numbers of farmers have been displaced and unemployment has increased.

The communities of Park Estate, Balca and Belmont were originally part of plantations on which residents once worked, but now there is no work for farmers in the former and only for a few in the latter. In Belmont farmers now rent land from the company that owns it, and the farmers in Migny now mainly produce citrus, dasheen and flowers. In De Barras with new ownership residents have had curtail cultivation of crops because they are being destroyed by animals.

In some communities, Desrameaux and Belmont, there are squatter settlements comprising of poor and inadequate housing, and in Rosseau there are still some of the barrack structures reminiscent of the days of the sugar plantations, but in places like Belle Vue, the housing stock is much better and includes several solid wooden and concrete houses.

As in the urban communities, the population in many of the rural communities is young, with the majority being under 45 years. However there are a significant number of older persons in several of the communities, especially in the more remote communities like Migny, Bouton and Balca where about one third of the population are retired/elderly persons. In Balca too there are also a significant number of persons of East Indian descent.

In most of communities, there is little difference in the numbers of males and females, but in Desremaux the large number of young males is evident, and in Balca and Des Barras there are more females. In some communities, there are also a few individuals with disabilities.

There is a significant amount of migration from some rural communities to Castries, especially by young people seeking better opportunities, employment and entertainment. Some residents also migrate to North America and Canada, and to other Caribbean countries including Martinique to which a significant number of residents from Belmont and Rosseau have migrated. This outward migration has not only contributed to shifts in the composition of the rural population, but it has also deprived some communities like Bouton of valuable human resources and skills. Depletion of the youthful population also has serious implications for the maintenance of a productive and profitable agricultural sector.

In some communities like Des Barras, Praslin and Belle Vue, physical features and natural resources offer potential and possibilities for the development of eco-tourism.

### **2.1.3 Communities Surveyed in 1995**

Four of the communities surveyed in 1995 are rural and their residents identified some of the changes that have taken place over the last 10 years.

Residents in Balca were of the view that the community was a better place 10 years ago. Then some of them were employed on the estate and some were allowed to cultivate small plots. However, this is not allowed now and since there is no access to land unemployment has increased. Residents saw the resulting loss of income as a major setback and felt that it has contributed to poverty as well as to an increase in involvement in use of illegal drugs and in criminal activity. They expressed concern about the mushrooming of:

*"...a kind of ghetto called "The Gulf" where young men go to smoke"*

And noted that:

*"... the drugs can destroy everything".*

They also felt that family relationships have deteriorated, and they were worried about young people's lack of respect for their parents and for elderly persons. According to them women were now being treated worse, men now had very little patience and they were:

*"...players wanting several women".*

One positive change identified by residents was the greater emphasis being placed on education by parents and the effort that they were making, in spite of hardships, to send their children to school. They felt that this was a major change that could contribute to a more educated and improved community.

Residents in Belmont pointed to the poor conditions of the infrastructure including roads and drains which they said were in a worse condition now than they were 10 years ago. Absence of facilities like a health centre, community centre, day care centre or preschool, and a good playing field were seen to contribute to poverty in the community. At the same time, while there has been some improvement in toilet facilities, public property was being abused and vandalised. Residents were concerned about poor water quality and irregularity of the water supply, but agreed that there had been an increase in the number of households that now have telephones, including cell phones.

Belmont was traditionally a banana producing community, but with the decline in the industry unemployment has increased, there are few job opportunities and money was scarce. They reported:

*"Ten years ago banana had money, put money in people's pocket"  
"There are no jobs in Belmont now."*

According to residents, unemployment has contributed to several problems. Unemployed young men now usually hang out on the "Block" and use illegal drugs, there is more indiscipline and delinquency, there has been an increase in teenage pregnancy, and more people are turning to alcohol.

A major change in Bouton was outward migration that resulted in a dramatic decrease in population and the resulting loss of vital human resources. They noted that:

*"Bouton is people poor, we don't have many people".*

This is a direct result of migration of young persons who on graduating from secondary school leave for the city seeking a better life, employment and entertainment. As a result, the small population was made up mostly of older persons. There are no opportunities for employment in Bouton, no recreational facilities and nothing to do. Residents lamented the fact that:

*"Young people have to go to Castries and sell their bodies to make money".*

They were of the view that establishment of a factory to process the many fruits that grow there would provide opportunities for employment and would help to alleviate this problem. They said that over 10 years ago they suggested this to representatives of the Poverty Reduction Fund and the Rural Enterprise Project, but to date nothing has happened.

Most of the land was owned by the church and while some was readily available for housing and agriculture, not many residents were engaged in the latter. They indicated that:

*"The land is there but they don't do anything with it".*

*"Would you believe people actually go to Soufriere to buy green fig and plantain?"*

There has been some improvement in the road, but 10 years later it is still in a poor condition and few vehicles attempt to traverse it, so that transportation to and from the community is still a big problem. Inadequate drainage is also a problem, and while access to water has improved, water availability in the dry season becomes a problem and because of the poor condition of the catchments the water is exposed and therefore not safe for drinking. Residents pointed out that they have been complaining to WASCO for over twenty years but with no result. On the positive side, the school was now functioning better, there was now electricity and several residents had cell phones. However there were no land lines and no public facilities like toilets and baths or a health centre. It was noted that the level of crime was low but consumption of alcohol by women as well as by men was high.

In Rosseau over the last 10 years housing has improved as government and house owners repaired leaking roofs and rotting floors. More homes now had electricity, but there was a problem with drinking water since the standpipe had ceased to function. The public toilets were not functioning and people defaecate in surrounding areas and while there is now a place designate for garbage disposal some residents still litter and dispose of their garbage irresponsibly. The main road was now in a better condition, and more buses were operating so transportation was not a problem, but the road to the beach needed to be repaired.

Rosseau was once a thriving community producing significant quantities of bananas, but the decline in the banana industry has had a devastating effect as the people's source of income disappeared and their financial situation worsened. There are now fewer job opportunities, higher unemployment and less money circulating in the community.

*"Ten years ago when Geest was here more money existed and people had more money than now".*

As a result, fewer people now have access to land are able to access credit or to acquire other resources needed to sustain their livelihoods, and according to residents, one result was the inability to afford nutritious meals and to eat regularly.

Ten years ago, there was a greater level of understanding among residents and there were several groups operating in the community, but this was no longer the case. According to residents, over the last ten years relationships between young and old, between parents and children, and between men and women have deteriorated. Some noted:

*"Children now have no respect for their parents or for older people".*

*"Men and women have children but do not support them".*

*"Men and women treat each other bad, there is much more jealousy now."*

Crime was low and was mainly limited to petty theft, but over the last 10 years drugs had become more readily available, and there had been an increase in the use and trafficking of illegal drugs.

On the positive side, there were now more educational opportunities and more children were completing primary and attending secondary school. There had also been an improvement in the health services.

In Baron's drive the only urban community surveyed in 1995, the infrastructure had improved, the road was in good condition; there were two stand pipes, telephone lines, and most homes had electricity. However, poor drainage contributed to flooding, there were no public wash rooms or toilets, and while most people used pit latrines, several houses had no toilet facilities. Residents, therefore, were concerned about disposal of faeces in public places. The comment was made that:

*"We shouldn't have to expose ourselves on stones."*

There was some degree of overcrowding in small poorly constructed houses and in the residents' opinion, since Hurricane Lenny conditions in the community had worsen. According to residents:

*"It is 500 times worse. The road did not bring any new development it just put there to kill people."*

*"They say they moving people but we never see them again."*

Several residents depended on the sea to sustain their livelihoods and several own boats that they used for fishing or as water taxis. However for some, the high price of gas was problem, and this along with their inability to secure loans from the fisherman's cooperative, limited their ability to consistently earn an income. They noted that:

*"The sea is a good source of income and food."*

*"Gas so expensive we can't afford to go to sea, but if we raise the price of fish, the poor people can't afford it."*

The fishermen were also dissatisfied with the way in which the Soufriere Marine Management Association was operating, and with its negative impact on them. According to them:

*"They took the sea from us. It force us to go further out. They make money from the fish reserves but we not getting anything out of it."*

*"We fishing in the off season."*



At the same time, water taxi operators experienced problems with getting licenses to operate their water taxis. They reported:

*"Before you had to present a birth certificate, now they asking for so many things, it is impossible to meet the requirements."*

*"For years now I trying to get a license and these guys refuse to give it to me."*

While a few people referred to the number of Vincentians who come to Barons Drive by boat, most said that they were welcome once they did not create problems. One resident reported that:

*Most people coming to Baron's Drive from St Vincent. As long as they don't cause trouble we have no problem."*

## **2.2 LIFE AND LIVING CONDITIONS IN THE COMMUNITIES**

### **2.2.1 The Economic Dimension**

Decline in the banana industry has caused major structural changes in the national economy and this had a serious negative impact on several rural communities. In these communities, the general decline in agriculture, especially of the banana industry, along with inadequate markets for other agriculture produce, has contributed to a slow down in economic activities and to circulation of less money. In a few communities like Belle Vue, rearing of livestock is a source of income, but in most of the others, several residents depend on odd jobs - men mostly in the construction industry when available and women in vending agricultural produce, food and craft items. In several of the communities there are one or two individuals who own and operate small shops and/or bars, and in Des Barras the Turtle Watch Group is a source of income for some residents.

In the urban communities, because of the proximity of business the potential to earn an income may be higher than in rural communities, but because of low levels of education, lack of experience and the stigma of living in these communities, many residents are unable to obtain jobs. People were very much aware of the link between education and employment and of the failure of the education system to prepare them for the world of work. They lamented that:

*"Education does not prepare you for the job market."*

*"When you go for a job, they asking how much paper and how much experience you have"*

*"How can you get experience before you get a job?"*

The stigma attached to communities like Faux-a-Chaux, Wiltons Yard and The Mangue was also used by some prospective employers to deny residents employment, so the latter experience great difficulties in obtaining jobs. One resident reported:

*"When I tell them that I live in Faux-A-Chaux, he told me to get out of his office because he don't trust people who live here."*

In the rural as well as in the urban communities few jobs or job opportunities have contributed to high levels of unemployment. In several communities residents complained about the fact that not only were there few if any employment opportunities, but that even if employed the wages were sometimes so low that it was not worthwhile to work. Comments made included:

*"There is nothing to do here".*

*"Even though you get a job, the money is not enough even to pay bus fare to go to work."*

*"Imagine at the hotel they paying the girl \$100.00 a fortnight, it was too little bit, she had to stop."*

High levels of unemployment and under-employment have led to the growth of alternative economies in several of the communities. Several residents were involved in and relied on the informal economy where they were involved in a range of income generating activities, including buying and selling of agricultural produce (men and women), construction (mostly men), and domestic work in homes or offices (women). Others, especially young men, have to "hustle" and do odd jobs, including car washing and running errands and some young women were reportedly engaged in the sex trade.

At the same time, in about 90% of the communities there has been an increase in the number of illegal activities, including crime, gambling and drug trafficking to generate income and in many these were seen as important and common economic activities, especially for unemployed young people, and especially for unemployed young men.

*"Some people make a living by selling weed."*

*"The drug helping the community, it help pay the bills, feed families."*

While some people do credit, mostly from the shop or from Courts, several complained about the fact that they were unable to access credit because they had no collateral and others pointed out that the criteria set by the financial institutions automatically excluded the poor.

*"There is nothing in place to access loans" (fishermen in Barons Drive)*

*"The people who really need it can't benefit because they set come criteria that the common poor man cannot get in, those who already have are the ones who benefit."*

## **2.2.2 The Social Dimension**

### ***2.2.2.1 Alcohol and Drug Use***

In a few of the communities, residents were of the view that when compared to other communities there were few social problems in theirs. However, in the majority of communities, unemployment was seen to have contributed to the many of the social problems that existed. In many, there is the existence of a drug culture that appears to have become a "normal" activity and large numbers of young people, both male and female but larger numbers of the former are involved in trafficking and use of illegal drugs. Not only has there been an increase in the use of illegal drugs, including cocaine, in all of the communities, but smoking of marijuana in particular is now done in the open. According to residents:

*"People no longer hide to take drugs"*

*"Marijuana, cocaine, hash, it is a competition, I have the ting so I have to sell it to him before someone else."*

Alcoholism is also prevalent in some communities, especially among older men and women in Bouton and Mon Jacques and in the latter has on occasion contributed to violence.

### **2.2.2.2 Increasing Violence**

In the urban areas, gang warfare, violence and crime are threats to personal safety. The existence of gangs in Faux-a-Chaux appears to have evolved from school days when those who did not join gangs were seen as "soft" or as a "sweet boy." The following comments were made:

*"There were gangs during my school days we had to have gangs to protect ourselves. We had weapons, scissors and knives." (Youths 15-25 years).*

*"I have to break the man foot or kill him so he don't trouble me again."*

Gang warfare and violence appear to be accepted by some young people, but especially by some young men, as the way to solve problems and to reduce conflict, and involvement in criminal activities appears to have become a way of life for some young people in the community. According to residents:

*"Fellas live on crime."*

*"Fights? Yes. Excitement, we have bottles, stones, bottles, cutlass. We just flag the guns, it only go off if you set it off, you use it in times of need."*

Some of the young men even explained how they get and why they use guns:

*"When the police set up road blocks and the fellas through the guns in the bush you buy and trade them."*

*"You trigger happy you use the guns for armed robbery, it make your job easier. If you don't have a gun de person go want to give you trouble, but if you have one they will say 'look it, take it'."*

### **2.2.2.3 Teenage Pregnancy**

While gang warfare and violence were more prevalent among young males, teenage pregnancy and prostitution were more prevalent among females. Some young women admitted that they had had their first child at a very young age, sometimes as young as 14 and 15 years and that because of pregnancy they had to drop out of school. Some reported:

*"Children making children."*

*"I got to senior primary and I finished the first term, but I got pregnant and had to leave."*

*"I had to leave school to take care of my baby."*

Because these young women have not completed formal schooling and have no qualifications, their chances of finding employment are few. In some cases, some poor young women may feel that they have no choice than to turn to prostitution, and in one case to suicide.

*"My parents cannot maintain me so I may end up selling myself and may want to commit suicide."*

#### **2.2.2.4 Access to Education**

Even although opportunities to access formal education were many and available to all many residents in the communities studied had either not completed their education or had only a low level of education. In some cases attendance at school was low and drop out rates high, and in several cases this had resulted from parents' inability to provide lunch, transportation or books for their children. While no data were collected on school performance, the number of younger people who had no formal qualifications suggests that performance was also low and as some people pointed out, if children were hungry, they can't learn. At the same time several of the older residents either did not go to school or had only a primary education.

*"When children hungry they can't focus and concentrate."*

*"I left school in second form."*

*"I didn't get any certificates."*

Socioeconomic deprivation is also given expression in the social relations that individuals have with their immediate community and wider society. In its most acute form, it is reflected in stigma. Perhaps the most renowned academic definition of stigma comes from Goffman who characterises it as "an attribute that is deeply discrediting" and leads to the diminution of the personhood of the bearer of the stigma.<sup>1</sup> This is associated with reduced life chances for the individual. Stigma consists of four main components. These are: labeling, stereotyping, separation and status loss. One critically important related factor, the literature tells us is that these components can only operate in a situation of power differential that is unfavourable to the stigmatised.<sup>2</sup> The case of Joyce and Janet provides an example of the effect of stigma within a poor community.

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<sup>1</sup> Goffman, E. Notes on the management of spoiled personality: Simon and Schuster Inc. 1963. For a treatment of the concept from a social psychological standpoint see Heatherton T. et al, The Social Psychology of Stigma, Guilford Press, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Link, Bruce G., Jo C. Phelan, On Stigma and its Public Health Implications.

### **BOX 2.1: THE IMPACT OF STIGMA**

*Joyce and Janet say that their community is a good one. Joyce says, though, that some of the people are vicious backbiters. Her experiences would seem to represent an instance of the way in which the poor are stigmatised because of their poverty. Joyce reveals that some of the people in the community taunt her for her poverty by telling her to go and look for a bed to sleep and "you don't have nothing. Before I live here I used to live up there in a little room and on the floor there was no concrete. Some of them when they quarrel with me they say stop sleeping in stone like sardine in tin, because all of my children and me used to live together. They tell me stop sleeping on bed in cabin. I don't care with what they say. I saying someday God will give me something well. They sending me and buy things and I not working. Where I taking money to buy things? They telling me stop putting dead people clothes (clothes from charity) on me. I don't care what they say huh. So long as is not I ask them for their things and they giving it to me, I taking it well."*

*Although there are a number of hotels in the area neither woman has tried to get employment with one. Why? Janet answers. "It's the same thing I telling you they (the people in the community who work in the hotels) choosing their friends.. people that have already and they fighting you down. They complain about you. They don't like your head. If they don't like you, you don't bound to do them anything. They don't like your style. They don't like how you move.. sometimes if they see you getting higher than them they make complaints about you (to hotel management) just to make them fire you. So I not sending applications, I not going to look for jobs. I don't like people like them."*

*Why not go somewhere where they don't know you. Have you ever thought of getting a job at a hotel in Castries? Janet responds, "But my children. .where I getting money [for busfare]."*

### **2.2.3 Poverty and the Environment**

The physical environment within which poor people live has an impact on their lives. The environment can provide them with natural resources that they can use as the basis for economic activity, for food security and to sustain their livelihoods, but at the same time environmental conditions can be a threat to their health and well being, and their security and safety.

There was a significant difference in the physical environment of the urban, semi-urban and rural communities studied. The urban and sub-urban communities have few natural resources on which residents can depend to sustain their livelihoods. However, the poor condition of their physical environments is a threat to residents' health. In these communities there is a lack of physical space leading to overcrowding, poor drainage and flooding, poor sanitation and inadequate storage of food, littering and improper garbage disposal, absence of and poor condition of toilet facilities, sewage problems and disposal of feces in the sea and surrounding areas. Rats and mosquitoes are also prevalent. This creates an unhealthy physical environment that creates risks and poses threats to residents' health.

In the rural communities many residents depend on the natural resources for their livelihoods. The land, sea, rivers and forests were not only sources of income but provided food security for many who may not have money, but who are able at least to get a meal of ground provision and fruit. However, the use of natural resources while providing income for some depletes these resources and limits the ability of others to benefit from them. Deforestation and removal of top

soil have resulted in landslides and soil erosion. Residents reported on the incidence of over-fishing, poisoning of rivers and sea to increase the fish catch size, and prevalence of sand mining.

Indiscriminate deforestation along with poor drainage in Desrameaux, Des Barras and Park Estate and poor agricultural practices including the use of chemicals, have had serious negative impacts on the natural resources in these communities. In Praslin there is a concern about pollution of the mangrove about cutting down of the trees there to burn in the charcoal pit and about the use of the ravine as a source of water which can result in depletion of the crayfish and tilapia stock.

Availability of good quality drinking water is essential but residents in Desrameaux, Rosseau, Anse Le Raye, and Morn Jacques did not always have access to good quality drinking water on a regular basis, and in others like Anse Le Verde several people reported that they had to walk long distances to get water. In some communities like Anse Le Raye, Faux-a-Chaux and Baron's Drive their water sources, including the rivers and the sea were being polluted by human faeces, by seepage of agricultural and other chemicals, and by the dumping of garbage. In Park Estate and Des Barras, where rivers were being used for bathing and washing of clothes and vehicles, chemicals were also being deposited in the water.

Residents in Belle Vue, The Mangue and Rosseau were concerned about the presence of rats and mosquitoes; in Park Estate, Desrameaux, and Praslin, about stray dogs; in Praslin and Des Barras about the African Snail; and also in Praslin about wild pigs near the river bank. In communities where residents rely on rivers for their water supply, they were concerned about stagnant water and pollution of the river. In addition, in a few communities residents were concerned about the present of snakes as a result of clearing of land, about air pollution from second hand smoking and burning of rubbish. There were also concerns about smells from livestock pens (for chicken and pigs) in Rosseau and Des Barras and about noise pollution in Belle Vue.

All of these environmental issues have implications for the conditions under which residents live, for their health, the quality of their lives and their sense of well being. While many of the health problems appear to be linked to life style diseases, some of the illnesses like asthma and other respiratory diseases in children and adults can be caused by environmental factors. Contamination of food by rats and other pests, and by chemicals in agricultural produce and fish can also cause certain diseases. At the same time in several communities, lack of toilet facilities and disposal of human waste in the sea, rivers and banana fields are dangerous activities that threaten the health of everyone in a community.

#### **2.2.4 Natural Disasters**

All of the communities felt the effect of natural disasters, especially storms and hurricanes and residents were now more willing to take these seriously and to prepare for them. It was reported that drought also creates problems in some communities. At the same time there was a feeling that while people were somewhat more aware of and concerned about environmental

issues much more needs to be done to educate them about environmental conservation and degradation, and about their responsibility for and the benefits that would be derived from judicious use of natural resources and from protecting the environment.

### **2.2.5 Facilities and Services**

While facilities and services may be available, the extent to which residents can access and/or afford them is determined by factors such as distance, hours and time of delivery, the cost and the quality of the services being provided, and the attitude of the providers.

Some of the communities are well served with services and facilities and residents can readily and easily access them. This is so in Belle Vue and also in the urban communities because of their proximity to Castries and Vieux Forte. However in several of the rural communities, including Mon Jacques, Balca, Migny, and Park Estate, there are few, if any facilities and/or services in the community. Residents in these and in some other communities were also concerned about poor roads, absence of electricity and telephone lines, and inadequate water supply and absence of recreational facilities, pre-schools and day care centres. Some comments sums up the situation:

*"There are no facilities here, no cable, no telephone, no library and no place to put one, and the preschool mash up."* (Residents in Balca)

*"Belmont is not yet a place, Government refuse to build roads because this area is not in the project."* (Resident in Belmont)

*"We do not have roads in Dearameaux, access to water is poor and the water quality is poor."*

*"We like sports but there is no playing field or sporting facilities here."* (Youth in Morne Jacques)

*"If we had a proper field we would have a strong girls' football team."* (Young women in Praslin)

#### **2.2.5.1 Health Services**

In several of the communities residents were particularly concerned about the unavailability of health services and expressed their feelings in the following statements:

*"Too far from major health clinics or health services."* (Residents in Balca)

*"The Health Aide Nurses do not visit the community regularly. We only see them every four or five months"* (residents in Migny)

*"It hard to get a ride to the clinic at Mocha no transport goes there and if you are old or if you have a child, how you getting there if you don't have a ride?"* (Residents in Migny)

*"A lot of people here suffer with diabetes and hypertension but no Health Aid or anyone from the health department comes here."* (residents in Bouton)

*"Sometime ago someone was in the hospital and people had to walk to town, by the time they got there the person had died."*(residents in Bouton)

*"Many people cannot afford medication. if you don't have an exemption card you have to pay."* (elderly group in Anse Le Raye)

Another issue that affects the quality of services being offered was the attitude of the providers and difficulty in understanding information given. Residents in some of the communities commented on this and pointed out that it often determines their decision on whether to use the service or not. According to them:

*"The nurses and doctors talk people business."  
"I have to scream loud or play sick to get attention."  
"The doctor telling you take off your panty, lie down and don't forget to open."  
"Their attitude poor and the service not that good it needs improving."  
"It not very efficient, you have to wait long, but it OK"*

### **2.2.5.2 Public Sanitation Services**

In several communities residents agreed that there has been an improvement in sanitation service because garbage was now being collected on a regular basis.

*"Before we had to burn it but now there are garbage trucks to pick it up."*

### **2.2.6 Social Networks**

Relationships between residents vary from community to community, but in some of the communities relationships are harmonious, there are networks of formal and informal support systems, and residents cooperate and help each other in time of need. People also have pride in their communities.

*"We are a proud people, we stick together, and they can't do anything to bring us down."  
(Baron's Drive)  
"I love my community, you can have confusion here, but when a house in flame everybody running, people forget they vex with you." (Faux-a-Chaux)  
"We help ourselves, we don't depend on people from outside."*

In some communities relationships were based on location and on age with persons from different parts of the community and/or of similar ages interacting closely. However in some other communities, including The Mangue and Rosseau, relationships were characterised by mistrust, disagreements, conflict over petty situations, quarrels and fighting. One of the contributing factors is the close proximity in which people live, communal living, lack of privacy and life being lived on the open in the streets. The following two comments summed up the existing situation in these communities:

*"There is quarreling everywhere."  
"Too much confusion and conflict."*

In many of the communities residents indicated that there was tension between older and younger groups of people and many were concerned about the poor relationship between parents and children because they saw these as factors that were contributing to the increase in indiscipline and juvenile delinquency.



While in many communities there were networks of mutual support and cooperation, especially in times of need, in others, lack of cooperation and community spirit were seen as stumbling blocks that adversely affected progress and initiatives designed to improve and develop the community.

### 2.2.7 Perception and Definition of Poverty

In the Community Workshops residents had opportunities to reflect on life and living conditions and to discuss the existence, types and levels of poverty existing in the community and to identify the factors that contributed to it. In all of the communities there was a great deal of discussion about whether the community was poor or not. There were residents who thought that their community was poor and others who thought that it was not. However five communities were eventually classified as very poor, ten as poor and two as better off, but with small pockets of poverty. Residents in two communities were of the view that when compared to other communities they were not bad and in Anse Le Verde comparisons were made with poverty in Africa:

*“We are affected by a different category of poverty. We cannot be compared with people in Africa poverty here has to do with unemployment”.*

Table 2.2: Level of Poverty in Communities: Resident’s Perception

Community	Very Poor	Poor	Not Bad Compared to Others	Better Off
Anse le Raye		*		
Anse Le Verde			*	
Balca		*		
Baron's Drive		*		
Belmont		*		
Belle Vue			*	
Bouton		*		
Des Barras				*
Desrameaux		*		
Faux-a-Chaux	*			*
The Mangue	*			
Migny		*		
Morne Jacques			*	
Park Estate	*			
Praslin		*		*
Rosseau		*		
Wilton Yard	*			

Discussion of relative and absolute poverty revealed that while there were some cases of absolute poverty in many of the communities, there were also some residents who were better off. According to residents:

*"The community has both wealth and prominence and well known persons who stand out"*  
(Faux-a-Chaux)

*"George Cooper Road is like Beverly Hills, the people own both houses and land"* (Faux-a-Chaux)

Residents in Belle Vue and Desmareaux also identified the existence of working poor.

*"Most persons live from paycheck to paycheck."*

*"The money not enough to pay the bills and buy food."*

*"Even if you work you still poor because bills take up all your money."*

In all of the communities, residents were able to identify some destitute individuals among whom were "the hidden poor," females who were single parents, the elderly, and the disabled. However, because of pride, of the stigma attached to being poor, and of the possibility of being labelled and discriminated against, many of these poor individuals are reluctant to admit to being poor. One resident noted:

*"I owe the credit union and I am scared that they announce my name on the radio"*

Distinctions were also drawn between private and public poverty, individual, household and community poverty. Private poverty was seen as poverty and deprivation being experienced by individuals and households,

*"They have no food they come by the road to look for food every morning."*

*"There are extreme cases of poverty here, people not able to send their children to school."*

*"When I wake up in the morning I have nothing."*

Residents' definition of public poverty was based on the existence of poor infrastructure and absence of facilities and services, poor living conditions in the community and neglect of the community by the Government.

*"We are not poor, but the community is poor"* (Bouton)

*"I know this is a poor community."* (Wilton's Yard)

*"We have so few facilities here, the roads bad, no community centre...."* (Park Estate)

Because the poor are the best persons to identify the poorest persons in their communities, during the community workshops with the help of the Wealth Ranking Indicators Matrix residents were also able to identify some of the poorest individuals and families and where they lived. Residents in Des Barras were of the view that their community was not poor. However in some communities pockets of poverty that included some destitute individuals were concentrated in particular parts of the community. This was so in Faux-a-Chaux, in Belmont

and in “The Barr” in Balca. Residents in Desrameaux said that poverty was spread throughout the community, and those in Praslin indicated that poor and better off households existed side by side.

Residents in all of the communities agreed that lack of jobs and of opportunities to earn an income was one of the main causes of private poverty. Other causes were lack of and low levels of education, few skills, and lack of self esteem. Some were also of the view that laziness and lack of motivation also caused some persons to be poor. According to residents, the factors that are responsible for their communities being poor include lack of facilities, services and resources and neglect by government.

The experience of being poor and the effect of living in a poor community create feelings of helplessness, frustration and powerlessness, stress, anger, dependency, and shame in many people. Some described their situation by the following comments:

*“I am frustrated, can’t get what I want.”*

*“I poor already, there isn’t anything I can do.”*

*“I feel very bad being from Balca, it brings me low down.”*

*“We have to crouch when we have to say we from Balca*

There was general agreement among residents that children, the elderly and women who were single parents were most affected by poverty. According to residents:

*“There is no money for lunch or bus fare so children can’t go to school everyday, they miss out on education.”*

*“It affects women who are single parents most because they have to provide for the children by themselves.”*

*“In this community there are elderly people who are very poor.”*

*“The woman has a small child to provide for so she goes to another man cause she was abandoned by the child’s father, only to get a child by the new man, and the cycle is repeated again and again.”*

Several persons were also of the view that living in poverty not only makes people feel insecure but it puts them at risk and many felt that this was especially true for women who sought help from several male partners and many of whom ended up with unwanted pregnancies and large numbers of children. The following revealed their experiences:

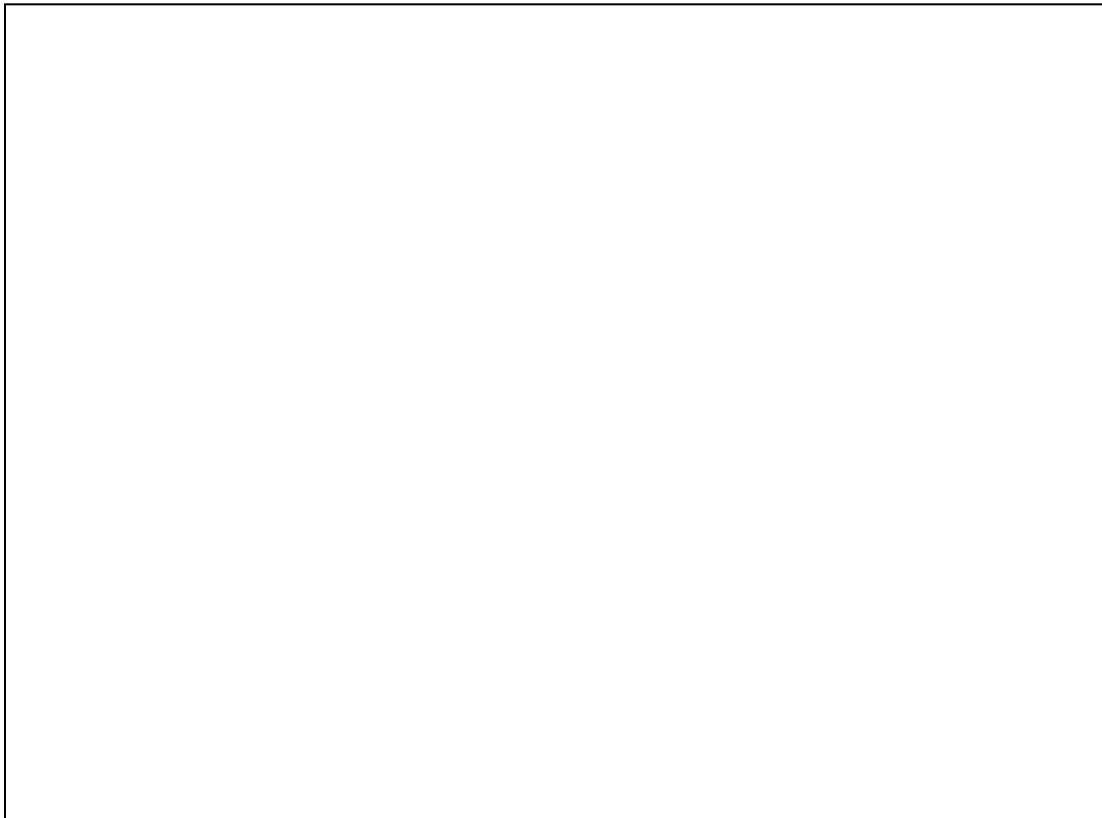
*“The woman has a small child to provide for so she goes to another man cause she was abandoned by the child’s father, only to get a child by the new man, and the cycle is repeated again and again.”*

*“Without money, you keep passing from man to man, child after child.....”*

*“Poverty produces insecurity and risks, the risk of sexually transmitted infections and of AIDS.”*

### 2.2.8 Sense of Well Being and Quality of Life

Appreciation of and sensitivity to the sense of well being and quality of life that people enjoy depend on a holistic view of their situation and on an understanding of the many factors that determine the conditions under which they live. During the community workshops residents developed graphs on the Wheel of Well Being that showed the physical and material, the economic, the social, and the spiritual, emotional and psychological well being, and they completed the QOL index to assess the quality of life that they enjoyed. The in-depth and wide ranging discussions that followed these activities showed that while the physical and material needs of residents in 64% of the communities were being met, in the rest, especially in the urban communities, many residents did not have adequate shelter and/or sufficient food. At the same time, in just over half (52.9%) of the communities, there were few or no facilities. An interesting point emerging from this exercise was the high rating given to clothing, especially by young people, and the discussion about the possession of “brand name” clothing. The discussion that followed centered around the relative value being placed on clothes compared to that being placed on food and other basic needs.



**FIGURE 2.1: WHEEL OF WELL BEING**

The low level of economic well being was graphically reflected in the graphs on the Wheels of Well Being and in the completed Quality of Life Indices. They showed that the quality of life for the majority of residents in poor communities was being severely affected by the shortage of job

opportunities and employment in 70% of the communities. This along with inability to earn an income and lack of access to financial resources in 50.9% of the communities means that many of the residents in these communities experience difficulty in meeting their basic needs and sustaining their livelihoods. As a result participants in the workshops often complained of being frustrated, of worrying, and of being “stressed out.” All conditions that would prevent them from enjoying a sense of well being and a high quality of life.

The social milieu within which people live and interact has a significant impact on their sense of well being. The data show that in many of the communities the social fabric of the communities is characterised by several social problems. The graphs in the section on social well being on the Wheels, are indications of residents’ views about the some of the factors that contribute to the low levels of social wellbeing in some of the communities. Among these were the quality of family life, relationships between different groups, and treatment of women and men which were given a low rating. In about half of the communities residents rated these as low and expressed concern about the unacceptable nature of relationships. In addition, while the data show that there has been a general increase in crime, the graphs reveal that those who participated in the workshops were of the view that it is higher in the urban than in the rural communities.



**FIGURE 2.2: QUALITY OF LIFE INDEX**

Having good health and some level of formal education can enable individuals to enjoy a good standard of living and feel a sense of well being. Data on the Wheels and QOL Indices suggested that residents in about half of the communities believed that they are in good health and that some residents do have an average level of education. However when they compared these ratings with the low scores given to the environment and to available facilities, and to ability to access job opportunities and to obtain jobs, they were able to see the discrepancies, to question the validity of their ratings and to discuss them in relation to the reality of their situation.

While spiritual, emotional and psychological well being plays an important part in how individuals feel about themselves and about the society and community in which they live, these are aspects that are often ignored. If people don't feel good about themselves, if they feel that they are not worth anything, that nobody cares and if they have negative feelings about where and how they are living, then they will have a low sense of well being. At the same time if they feel threatened and insecure this also determines their sense of well being and the quality of their lives. So that in communities with high level of crime, residents' sense of security was rated low. The graphs plotted in this section of the wheel confirm this as in more than half of the communities values, attitudes and self confidence were rated low while dependency was rated high.

During the workshops there was a lot of discussion on moral values and attitudes and on the levels of dependency and self confidence displayed by individuals in the communities. Several people realised that questionable values and poor attitudes not only contributed to poor relationships but that that low levels of self esteem and confidence could lead to high levels of dependency and constant rejection and to creation of situations that prevent individuals from achieving their goals and from moving out of poverty. This caused one young man to comment on the graph

*"Look at the low scores on the psychological, emotional and spiritual well being, it is no wonder that we are in the situation we are."*

### **2.2.9 Poverty Alleviation**

Institutions and organisations are vehicles through resources and services are delivered to community residents. In many of the communities there were institutions and organisations working to improve living conditions and the quality of life of people in poor communities and residents identified such institutions and organisations and located them on the Venn Diagrams created during the community workshops. These diagrams show that government institutions are the ones that are most visible in communities, that there are only a small number of NGO, including Mothers and Fathers Groups and some church groups, and that there are practically no Community Based Organisations in the majority of communities.

When participants categorised the institutions and organisations according to the type of assistance they provided it was evident that their interventions, programmes and activities of Government institutions were mainly remedial and that some were preventative, that those of

NGOs tended to be more supportive, and that developmental programmes were far fewer in number. However, discussion of the interventions of some organisations did reveal that some of them did provide all four types of services, for example in Faux-a-Chaux where residents identified the Church as the most important organisation and the one that was making a difference in poor people's life because:

*"The Nuns provide food, education, training, and spiritual guidance, and they care for the elderly."*

The data also show that in some communities like Des Barras where there were seventeen Government institutions, NGOs and CBOs, and in Belle Vue where there were over twenty that provide a variety of services, but that in others like Anse Le Verde there were only three and in Park Estate there were only four. In several of the communities, residents were not satisfied with the assistance being given by the various organisations and were especially concerned about the lack of action by Government institutions. For example, residents in Bouton indicated that a long time ago they had identified specific needs to the St Lucia Rural Enterprise Project and the Poverty Reduction Fund, but that neither of the latter had not done anything, and residents in Balca were of the view that interventions by the PRF and the Basic Needs Trust Fund were insignificant.

There is also a dearth of Community Based Organisations in some communities, and according to residents even when such groups are started, they often die because of leadership struggles, disunity, lack of community spirit, lack of interest, and non participation of residents in their activities.

### **2.2.10 Community Needs**

The communities are not homogeneous and while they do display several similarities, and some common needs, in each there are specific problems and particular needs. Residents in all of the communities were able to identify some positive features of their communities, but they were also very clear about what was needed to improve the quality of their lives and the conditions under which they were living.

**Table 2.3: Summary of Communities' Needs**

Community	Needs
Anse le Raye	Jobs, better housing for the elderly, bathroom facilities, clean water
Anse Le Verde	Employment opportunities, better quality water, speed bumps, better housing for the elderly, foot paths and drains, access to computers
Balca	Access to the land, employment opportunities, better road, food for the elderly
Barons Drive	Jobs, food, licenses, access to credit, good governance, public toilet and laundry, speed bumps, daycare, better drains
Bouton	Work for young people, factory to process fruits, better roads, better quality water, a factory, land titles, telephone land lines
Belle Vue	Community centre, library, computer lab, daycare centre, skills training, employment opportunities, greater involvement by government and more proactive approach by residents to developing the community.
Belmont	Employment, better roads and drainage, preschool, multi-purpose centre, playing field, activities for young people, access to land, better transportation, reliable water supply
Des Barras	More access to land as before, street lights on main road, more reliable transportation, control/eradication of the African snail and mosquitoes, control of stray dogs and other animals
Desrameaux	Better roads and drainage, better water quality and supply, employment opportunities, more reliable transportation, help for the elderly, computer classes, preschool, land tenure
Faux-a-Chaux	More access to toilet and bath facility better housing, relocation, job opportunities, education and skills training, behaviour change and conflict resolution programmes, recreational facilities
The Mangue	Job opportunities/creation, skills training, greater assistance from government institutions, social activities to improve self esteem, reopen the public laundry and toilets, reduction in the cost of social amenities, reduction in criminal activity,
Mingy	Work/jobs, phone booth, laundry, better roads, library, youth centre, skills training, help for the elderly, school bus, land lines
Mon Jacques	Library, computers, multi-purpose court, playing field, better roads, help for the elderly and for persons with disabilities, more assistance from government
Praslin	Jobs, education and training, markets for produce like sea moss, better representation from government, government to be more concerned, title to land, day care centre and pre school, to be rid of thieves, a multi-purpose centre
Park Estate	Job opportunities, markets for produce, title to land, fix the bridge and the road, basic amenities, community centre, health centre, pre school, telephone, recreation facilities, skills training
Rosseau	Better housing, relocation, the toilets to be opened, employment opportunities and jobs, education and training programmes, repair and cleaning of drains, day car centre
Wilton's Yard	Better housing and living conditions, relocation, employment/jobs, adequate salaries, food, clothing and shelter, access to credit, skills training,



## **2.3 THE HOUSEHOLDS**

### **2.3.1 Types of Households**

Interviews were conducted with the head of household or responsible adult in fifty four households but only six (11.1%) of the interviewees were male. Efforts to identify and interview more adult males proved to be futile. This was a matter of concern as it highlighted the absence of adult males not only in single parent female headed households but in multi-generational and in those with elderly females. In answer to the question “where are the men”, suggestions were made that some might be living with their mothers, on their own or that they might be in visiting relationships and might therefore reside in more than one household. This is an issue that needs to be researched further.

About 30% of the households contained nuclear families in which common law relationships predominated, in which most of the parents were between 30 and 40 years and in which the majority of children was under five years old.

Thirty per cent of the households contained multi-generational families that consisted of grand parents their child/children, mostly daughters, and their grandchildren. The majority of the grandmothers were between 40 and 50 years of age and the majority of children under twelve years of age. In 62.5% of these households there were children under five years, and in 31.3% children between six and 12 years old.

Just over 20% of the households were single parent female-headed families, 36.4% of which included children under five years of age and 36.4% children between six and 12 years, and in which just half of the parents (54.5%), was between the ages of 35 and 45.

Single person households were 18.5% of those interviewed, and the majority was elderly women (90%) living alone, half of whom were over eighty and 70% over seventy years old. There was one sibling household in which three sisters were living.

Over 60% of the households had between one and five persons, in 37% there were between six and 10 persons and in only a small number were there more than 10 persons. The largest households were in urban communities. Half of the households had children under five years of age, 70.4% had children between the ages of six and 12 and 44.4% had children between 12 and 15 years. There were almost an equal number of male (44) and female (45) children.

Since there is a link between level of education of household head, level of poverty and quality of life, the educational profile of head of household is important. Over three quarters (75.9%) of the household heads interviewed had a primary education and some of these had not even completed primary school. Just under a tenth (9.3%) had secondary education and some of these also had not completed mainly because of pregnancy. Many of the older interviewees had not been to school and several of the interviewees also admitted to being functionally illiterate, not being able to read or write. However, all who had children were making an effort to send them to school and in some households children were attending secondary school.

### 2.3.2 Perception, Experience and Effect of Poverty

A wealth ranking indicators matrix used to rank households indicated that 40.7% of them were very poor, one third was poor and 27.8% was better off.

Table 2.4: Households by Level of Poverty

Households	Very Poor	Poor	Better off	Total
Female headed	4	4	3	11
Nuclear	4	6	7	17
Multi-generational	9	2	4	15
Sibling		1		1
Single person	5	3	2	10
Total	22	17	15	54

More than half (56.3%) of the multi-generational households were very poor, half of the single person households was very poor, and over 70% of the female-headed households was very poor or poor. However, nuclear family had the largest number of “better off”. Poor households existed in all of the communities, but some of those in Anse Le Raye, Belmont, Rosseau and Faux-a-Chaux were among the poorest.

### 2.3.3 Perception, Effect and Impact of Poverty

It is in households that poverty is experienced and that the effects of private, structural and inter-generational poverty are felt most keenly. It is here too that the cycle of poverty is perpetuated and repeated. Interviewees were very clear about what poverty means. Some of the respondents noted:

- “Poverty is when you don’t have nothing”*
- “When you can’t take care of yourself.”*
- “No work, no food, nothing.”*
- “Can’t afford to have what you want.”*
- “When you poor you have to hustle to get what you want.”*
- “When you have to depend on people.”*
- “When you have to beg.”*
- “When you don’t have education or a proper job.”*

Thirty eight (70.4%) of the interviewees said that they were poor and shared their experience of poverty in the following:

- “Yes I poor I can barely eat, I need food.”*
- “I don’t have money to send the children to school.”*
- “I have to borrow soap from the neighbours.”*
- “I am poor I don’t know if I will ever come out of poverty.”*

*"I was always poor."  
"I can't do what I want, I have to hold myself tight."*

In many cases the cycle of poverty has continued over several generations and the majority said that growing up in a poor family was partly responsible for them and their children being poor too.

*"I born in a family that was poor."  
"I grow up in a poor family I had to start working a t 15 years."  
"We were poor they couldn't send me to school."  
"My father left my mother when I was a baby and we had it hard."  
"My grandmother was poor"  
"My family had nothing."*

While a few elderly persons who were interviewed said that they had always been poor, for others poverty had come with age. For these older interviewees loneliness, feelings of being abandoned and unwanted, and having no one to care have made the experience of poverty even more painful and distressing. They described their situation by the following:

*"I was not poor before, but now I am poor."  
"Wasn't poor before, but now I can't do things as before"  
"I am more poor than poor"  
"I very poor, I am alone, no family, nobody to care."  
"Old is poor."*

Those interviewees who said that they were not poor not only gave reasons for this, but they often compared themselves to others in their communities who were poorer. Two of them said that they were poor before but not now.

*"I neither poor nor wealthy."  
"I not very poor, but still can't afford everything I need."  
"I not by the street begging."  
"No I not poor, I can make a living for myself."  
"I poor a little not too much, I can afford to buy what I want."  
"I can meet my needs most of the time."  
"I have a little home and I can afford food and clothing"  
"I not poor like everybody else."  
"I poor, but others are worst of"  
"I was poor before but not now"*

A few people did say that being poor didn't affect them and some appeared to accept their situation.

*"Is poor I poor so I accustomed."  
"I don't feel bad, that's how it is."*

In addition to lack of employment and the absence of financial and other resources, illiteracy and low levels of education, lack of initiative and high dependency on government, and inertia and apathy in spite of available opportunities were seen as causes of poverty. The later emphasises the importance of individuals taking some responsibility for their situation and for making attempts to improve or change it. However several of those who admitted to being poor also displayed symptoms of psychological poverty. They appeared to be unmotivated, expressed feelings of powerlessness and felt that they had no choice.

*"You don't have a choice, that's the way it is, you can't do anything."*

*"I have to live with it."*

*"The way we get it the way we take it."*

*"I poor yes but I can't do nothing about it."*

*"I don't think I will ever come out of poverty."*

At the same time, stigmatisation and the way that they were often treated by others contributed to their lack of self esteem and low self confidence.

*"People feel they better than me because I can't afford"*

*"People look down on you."*

*"People don't want to mix with you because of where you live"*

*"Because you don't have they feel they greater than you."*

*"I feel unwanted and unimportant."*

Several interviewees said that they were unhappy, felt frustrated because they had to depend on others, and admitted that they were stressed out and often depressed and anxious. They noted:

*"I have to depend on people."*

*"I have to depend on the children father and he don't give much."*

*"I am frustrated, I can't give the children things they want."*

*"Things getting harder, I don't know what I will do."*

*"Bills to pay, food to buy, I don't know where the money coming from."*

*"I not happy with my life, it not a good life."*

*"When I get up in the morning I have a splitting headache, I ask God, where I will get food to feed the children."*

Most of the interviewees agreed that poverty had a negative effect on members of the household especially on children, elderly persons, and women, as well as on relationships between family members.

## **BOX 2.2: THE STORY OF RACHAEL, JOYCE AND JANET**

*Not much is known about Rachael. She is the mother of Joyce and the grandmother of Janet. Rachael did 'housework.' She had 10 children with five different men. She had her first child when she was 16 years old or younger. At age 19 she had Joyce, her third child. Joyce's father in turn had 6 children with women other than with Rachael. He worked as a machine operator in an edible oil factory.*

*Joyce describes herself as coming from 'a big poor family.' She is 39 years of age. She attended Southhall Primary. Her attendance was intermittent since as she puts it, "is not all the time my mother had to give me." Joyce left school at the age of 15 to have her first child. The first thing she mentions about the child's father is, "he didn't give me nothing, he didn't give me nothing." After having the child Joyce started washing for 'people.' At sixteen she had her second child. This child she had for a man other than her first child's father. By 18 she had a third child by yet another man. Joyce explains that the first baby father did not support her or the child. This forced her to resort to getting help from the man who was to become the father of her second child and so on. She had her last child 11 years ago and eventually had 10 children with 5 different men. She lives in a small room with three of her sons, a daughter and three grandchildren. Her other children are adults living on their own. Her eldest child is 29 years old.*

*Joyce earns a living by washing for people. No one in her household works besides herself. Two of her children are of school age. They are both boys. One attends Primary school the other attends a senior comprehensive school. She reports that both are doing well and she is particularly confident about the successes that the eldest will achieve. She says she sends them to school everyday. "If I don't have", she says "they getting in school" (in reference to assistance to needy children in school). "The two last one they learning a lot, but Janet and they, they were lasy they learning nothing."*

*Joyce's daughter, Janet, is 21 years old. She is one of the children who live with her mother. Janet has 3 children for three different men. She had her first child at 16. Joyce says of Janet's mating and childbearing pattern, "just like me, the first one not **feeding** her, she have to go and look for another one." The father of Janet's first child is from St. Vincent. Janet worked briefly with the STEP (govt sponsored casual labour). Her means of support though was from her children's fathers, washing and assistance from Joyce. Janet has no formal skill besides washing. She has no immediate plans for her life. Joyce says she is tired of telling Janet to go and look for work. She says she also tells her not to make anymore children.*

*Janet says even though she is not working now she is interested in doing so. She would take any kind of job and has gone out to look, but has not found any. She says she has no plan. Her eldest child, a girl, is 5 years old. Her mother is her main source of assistance now in providing for the child. When her mother has nothing Janet says she stays without anything and the child does not go to school. She insists she cannot send the child to school everyday. "Everyday? What if I have nothing? She going and watch children in the eye?"*

*Janet says she would like everything about her life to be changed. When asked why she does not change it she replies, "how I changing it and there is nothing to do?" She regards washing as her skill, but says she can also comb hair, and baby sit. She would take a course in these areas, "if I could get it." Her plan is that she would pay her mother to look after her children if she got a job. If she could get a job, Janet says, she would change the circumstances of her life. She is relying on Devine intervention through prayer to enable that to happen. She has not accompanied the prayer with any particular works, but "sometimes if you pray God will make things happen." Right now the only jobs available are through the STEP programme. Janet says "they are only giving to those who have already." She is unsure about the future. Her children she says, "could be in the same situation or it could be much better."*

*When asked, neither Joyce nor Janet can say what can stop the transmission of poverty across the generations. Janet says she does not plan to have anymore children, yet she has not done anything to stop herself from conceiving. In spite of the sparseness and squalor of the surroundings the infants all appear well fed, robust and healthy. Janet's daughter is at home today because all her uniforms are dirty. She does not send her to school also when she has nothing to give her. Janet, herself, did not take the secondary school entrance examinations (Common Entrance) because at the time the family lived outside of Soufriere and could not make it into town that day.*

They were of the view that poverty affected child rearing practices, that insufficient food and poor nourishment not only limited the physical development of children in poor households, but that such children often went hungry, could not go to school every day and were unable to learn. In addition, because some of them were not getting the medical attention they needed their health was in jeopardy, and others were being neglected and subjected to physical and sexual abuse, including incest. According to respondents:

- "Children are affected most because they depend on others for their welfare."*
- "Children upbringing is affected, they are left unwatched, and unsupervised they go astray."*
- "Young children out on the streets all night long."*
- "They cursing big people, even their parents."*
- "They have no manners."*
- "Many children can't go to school everyday."*
- "They can't focus on their school work, so they can't learn."*
- "Mothers can't afford to take them to the doctor."*
- "Some children being abused physically and sexually."*

Poverty also affected relationships between family members in several ways. In many poor households relations between partners and between parents and children were not harmonious and were characterised by tension, quarrels, disagreements, and conflict. Break up of families, domestic violence and abuse of women and children were seen to be common problems in some of the households. Respondents revealed:

- "Poor communication among family members, a lot of quarrelling."*
- "Women have to depend on men for money and when they don't get the relationship break up."*
- "When the man can't provide, the women leave him and go to another man."*
- "Frustration and anger leads to fights and abuse of women and children."*
- "Parents so frustrated they get angry and beat the children."*
- "There is a lot of domestic violence."*

#### **2.3.4 Living Conditions**

Families in the majority of households were living in small wooden houses with limited room and some of which were literally falling apart and lacked basic amenities like indoor pipes, kitchens, toilets and bathrooms. Although a significant number did have pit latrines, in several of the household members disposed of human excreta in the surrounding environment.

Amenities like good quality running water, electricity, telephone land lines and cell phones, and household appliances were not any longer regarded by interviewees as luxuries, but as essentials for enjoying a good standard of living and quality of life. Existence of them in households therefore cannot by themselves be used as one of the indicators of the absence of poverty, and although some or all of these were absent in many of the households, there were present in a significant number.

Forty three, nearly eighty percent (79.6%) of the households interviewed had electricity and electrical appliances, particularly fridges and TVs, including cable. However in many cases these were not working because interviewees could not afford to pay the electricity bill which according to them was too high and on which they would have to spend most of their money. Several persons also complained about the high cost of water and felt that WASCO was charging too much. In many of the households there were also gas stoves, but either because of inability to afford gas or as a strategy to save, wood and/or charcoal was being used extensively for cooking. Although land line telephones were not as common, several of the interviewees did have cell phones, and some of those who didn't, expressed a wish for them.

### 2.3.5 Household Headship

Interviewees identified several factors that determine household headship. Among these were:

- 1) earning power and responsibility for the welfare of the family:

*"He is the one working, he is the provider putting food on the table."*

*"I paying the rent."*

- 2) ownership of the house:

*"My name on the paper."*

*"I worked for the house"*

*"The house is mine, my partner met me with my own things."*

- 3) absence of an adult male:

*"I am the mother, there is no father here"*

- 4) and responsibility for decision making:

*"I am in control" I make the decisions."*

Not only were most of the interviewees female but nearly sixty percent (59.3%) of the households were headed by women. Based on interviewees' definition of head of household, in addition to single parent female headed households, women were household heads in one third of the multi-generational households, in 35.3% of the nuclear and in 90% of the single person households.

**Table 2.5: Household Headship**

Households	Male Head	Female Head	Both
Single Parent Female headed		11	
Nuclear	9	6	2
Multi-generational	8	5	2
Sibling		1	
Single person	1	9	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>4</b>

The large number of female heads is an indication that women living in these poor communities have the major responsibility for the welfare of families and for meeting their own economic and other needs as well as those of family members. However, the majority of these women although they have children, and sometimes grand children who were dependent on them, were unemployed. For example, 90% percent of the women who were single parents have children under the age of 18 years, but 80% of them were unemployed. Elderly women were the largest number of single person households, and many of these women were responsible for their own care and welfare.

Four of the older women interviewed had not been to school at all and were illiterate, and of those who went to secondary school, some had dropped out in forms one and three. Of the twenty one women who did go to primary school, half admitted that they were functionally illiterate. The respondents indicated:

*"I can only sign my name."*

*"I can read and write a little."*

*I can't read so good. "*

*"I have problems reading and writing."*

*"I am affected by education, I can't read and write and I never tried adult education."*

In spite of this, they all recognised the importance of education for obtaining a job and as a strategy for moving out of poverty. Consequently, many have children who are in secondary schools, and some of those who live in communities in which there are no daycare centres or nursery schools and who have young children, recognised the need for these. All of the women were making attempts to send their children to school every day, but many did not always have money for lunch, transportation and school books or for paying the examination fees for the CXC examinations.

*"The key is education you should start with your kids."*

*"Education is the key to success without it you can't get a proper job to be able to care for your family."*

*"Education is important to move forward and change your life."*

*"Learning is a life long process."*

*"The price of books too high more than a thousand dollars to buy secondary school books, I can't afford it."*

During the interviews women who were single parents were especially concerned about their inability to meet even the basic needs of food and shelter for their children. They were of the view that lack of a job, of access to financial and other resources, and especially the lack of support or financial assistance from the fathers of their children as factors that have contributed to the level of poverty that their families were experiencing.



### **2.3.6 Household Economies and Sustainable Livelihoods**

The economies of the households are very fragile and are dependent on the ability of household members to obtain employment that would produce enough money to meet needs. In the elderly single person households where individuals are unable to work, they depend on small pensions, welfare, and help from children or other relatives and friends. These persons are especially vulnerable and experience a great deal of anxiety and stress because they are unable to sustain their livelihoods as they would like. Many of them lack food and their dietary, nutritional and health needs are not being met because of lack of money.

In five of the households interviewed no one was employed. One of these was a disabled woman, and four were single parent female headed. One of the latter had been a better off banana farmer but had lost her job as the banana industry declined and was now poor. The other three were unable to find work, had also become poor and were experiencing problems in sustaining their livelihoods.

In forty two (77.77%) of the households one or two family members were employed either in fulltime, part time, or seasonal jobs. In more than half (53.70%) of these households there was at least one person employed, and in (24.07%) more than one person was employed. There were persons with full time employment in seventeen households, persons with part time employment in twelve and persons with seasonal employment in thirteen.

While the data show that a significant number of persons in these households were employed and therefore were generating some income, it is important to recognise that nearly half (46.29%) of them were working part time or in seasonal jobs. In addition, most of those employed were working in low skilled, low paying jobs cleaning of government offices and facilities including public toilets and baths, working in the STEP programme, in construction, and as labourers or doing odd jobs. A few were engaged in farming on a small scale and used the produce mainly for domestic consumption and a small number were self employed, but several of those who owned small shops admitted that the returns and profits if any were not large.

In sixteen of the households the average weekly income was between \$100.00 and \$200.00, and in nineteen households with monthly incomes, eleven earned between \$100.00 and \$500.00, and eight over \$500.00. In some of the households absent fathers did contribute money to the support of their children, but in several cases neither the amount of money nor the frequency of the contributions was consistent or reliable. At the same time while some of the households did occasionally receive remittances of money and gifts in the form of barrels from relatives or friends abroad they could not depend on these. As a result interviewees admitted that the incomes being earned and the money that was available was insufficient to meet their daily needs and to pay the bills. Most of the available money was spent on food and on electricity and medical bills and often one had to be neglected in order to do the other.

### **2.3.7 Assets and Resources**

Nearly ninety per cent (88.88%) of families owned the house in which they lived but only sixteen families owned land and twenty nine were squatting , twenty of these on family land. Issues of land ownership and title to land were raised on several occasions and many felt strongly that these issues need to be settled urgently. Several interviewees in rural communities were also concerned that they did not have access to land for agriculture and saw this as preventing them from earning an income.

Household assets usually consisted of very basic furniture, in some cases a chair, bed and table that may be in poor condition. Several had at least a stove and fridge, but in many cases these were not working either they had fallen into disrepair or the electricity had been cut off because the bill had not been paid. A few people owned domestic animals and one or two owned vehicles.

In theory all households have access to community resources and public services, however, the extent to which they use or can benefit from these is determined by their location and distance, by their cost and by the attitudes of the persons responsible for providing them.

Households also have access to credit but ability to repay prevents several from making use of this resource. However many families do credit from shops in the community and some have credited household items from Courts Ltd, but failure to pay often results in repossession of the items obtained.

Scarce financial resources were the norm in most households and interviewees saw this as a major cause of their poverty and reason for the conditions in which they were living. Because many women are unemployed they may depend on their partners or the fathers of their children for money, and while some do receive money from the latter, the amounts are usually very small and irregular. According to several women, unwillingness of fathers to contribute to the support of their children, and the fact that they may provide small amounts at irregular intervals, create hardships and limit their ability to provide sufficient food, threatens food security and prevents them from meeting the basic needs of the family.

### **2.3.8 Livelihood Strategies**

In spite of the hardships experienced by lack of money and access to resources, people in these households survive and they employ various strategies to sustain their livelihoods. Among these are careful budgeting, making do and doing without, dependency on others, begging, crime and drug trafficking, odd jobs, prostitution and faith in God.

*"I do what I can, God will do the rest."*

*"I use what ever I have to make ends meet."*

*"I make do with what I have."*

*I try to survive on it."*

*"I praise God to be alive"*

At the same time neighbours are often willing to help out, especially with food.

*"Neighbours are willing to share."*

*"If I don't have and my neighbour have she will give me some."*

A significant number of households rely on remittances and gifts of various kinds to survive and to sustain their livelihoods. Twenty households (37.45%) received remittances from relatives abroad and at home, but for some, these are not always received on a regular basis. Fourteen of the households receive small amounts of money in the form of social welfare, but only three interviewees said that they received a small amount of pension. Some households also receive barrels with clothes, toiletries, foodstuff and other items from abroad and others receive gifts from church and other charitable organisations.

### **2.3.9 Household Needs**

Poor families are faced with several problems that affect their ability to meet their basic needs and to sustain their livelihoods because availability of much needed resources and access to these resources are determined by external economic and social factors in the wider society. Because often in many of these households no one is employed and because household heads have no regular source of income they are often unable to access resources. Employment, money and food are therefore their most urgent needs. Other needs include adequate housing, support and assistance, and access to facilities and to free and reliable public services.

## **2.4 THE GROUPS**

### **2.4.1 Men**

Nearly two hundred men (191) men were recorded as having participated in focus group discussions. Several of the older men had had no formal education and just over half of them had a primary education, 14% had some level of secondary education and a small number had had some technical and vocational training. Fewer than half of them (45.02%) were employed in areas such as farming, fishing, construction, and a few in the STEP programme.

#### ***2.4.1.1 Perception, Experience and Effect of Poverty***

All of the men agreed that poverty was being deprived of opportunities to educate oneself and to work, not having access to resources or enough to survive and to live a decent life, and being unable to maintain and sustain yourself and your family, or to save.

*"When you poor you have nothing."*

*"If you do not work, you do not get pay and you cannot eat."*

*"There is no employment, without it where are you going?"*

*"Where are the job opportunities for the average man?"*

*"Even if you work you still poor, bills take up all the money."*

*"If you try to save something for sickness, you have to keep pinching till there is nothing left."*

They recognised different types of poverty and mentioned material as well as spiritual and psychological poverty.

*"There are different categories of poverty."*

*"There is spiritual poverty. A real measure of spirituality is the character of the individual."*

*"Poverty is a state of state of mind."*

*"A Hungry man is an angry man, your mind is focus on your belly."*

Some saw poverty as a curse, others saw it as a crime and for several it caused them to have a low self concept and to experience feelings of inadequacy as a man and as a provider for their families.

*"Poverty is a crime."*

*"You feel unnatural."*

*"To get money on a daily basis is almost impossible."*

*"We cannot go to drink, cost of living too high."*

*"I cannot get a job and I have five children, I feeling really depressed."*

*"When I work STEP I can't maintain my family."*

*"My pay too small I can't take care of my three children on that."*

Several of the men said that lack of access to resources prevents them from achieving their goals and aspirations and keeps them in poverty. They not only referred to lack of financial resources and access to credit, but men in rural communities also consistently referred to lack of and limited access to land. In addition, while poverty can force them into credit, it prevents them from saving.

*"Ten years I am a fisherman but I can't achieve what I want. I wanted my own boat, but I don't have the deposit, I want land but I still don't have it yet."*

*"I have a mind for a business venture and a plan, but I don't have the resources or cash."*

*"We don't have title to the land."*

*"I don't have title so I can't get a loan."*

*"As a poor man you have to have a certain amount of money to get land."*

*"I cannot achieve my goals."*

According to them even when systems and programmes were set up to assist, the conditions were such that it was difficult, if not impossible to access them in several ways.

*"What ever set up to help is difficult to access. These things are set up to keep people poor."*

*"The fishing complex buying the fish much lower than it is worth."*

The men were also aware that being poor not only affected them:

*"I am a grown man and I need food, clothing, and shelter."*

*"When you do not have money, you will take a drink quicker than when you have."*

*"As a man, no work, no money, it makes you mad."*

*"Men can kill themselves because of poverty, life frustrating them."*

but that it had a negative effect on their families,

*"The father is never there and this affects the family."*

*"How can I take care of my family when I can't afford?"*

*"I have no money so I can't send the children to school."*

*"We have families we need money on a daily basis."*

*"As a man having a family, you have a family to feed, bills to pay, it's a big stress on you."*

as well as on their relationships with their partners and with women on the whole.

*"Your girlfriend might horn you when you have no money."*

*"You can't make love on a hungry belly"*

*"When you come home and you have no money, the woman vex, vex, vex."*

*"Sometimes is like you want to kill the woman."*

*"Most times we stay hungry to give the woman something."*

*"You can loose your woman because of poverty you know."*

In comparing themselves to women some men thought that women fared better.

*"Unemployed women will get money quicker than an unemployed man because she has the sugar"*

*"A woman will get \$20.00 to buy a slipper faster than a man who needs 25cents to buy a bread."*

#### **2.4.1.2 Needs**

The greatest need expressed by most of the men was the need for a job that paid enough money to maintain themselves and their families.

#### **2.4.2 Women**

According to the numbers recorded, equal numbers of women and men participated in focus group discussions. Sixty nine of the women recorded (36.12%) had primary education, 16.23% had secondary and 10 had tertiary education. Seventy one of them (37.17%) were employed and 29.84 % unemployed. While more of the women than of the men had secondary and tertiary education fewer of them were employed than were the men.

##### **2.4.2.1 Perception, Experience and Effect of Poverty**

For women poverty means having a "low" standard of living, having to struggle to get the basics, food, clothing and shelter and not having enough to sustain their families.

*"Poverty is when the standard of living too high for you."*

*"Having nothing, can't meet your basic needs."*

*"When you poor you cannot do nothing, you can't afford food, sometimes not even one meal every day."*

*"Always owe never pay."*

*"The pain that poverty brings makes it difficult to speak about."*

*"How can we alleviate poverty if we don't have money or we can't get work?"*

Some also saw it as lack of opportunities, lack of education and as a state of mind, the way that people think and their lack of knowledge, and their reluctance to change.

*"When you can't get work, you struggling to get what you want."*

*"Poverty is a mental thing."*

*"The way we think get us stuck in poverty."*

*"When snail is crawling, that's like us in poverty."*

*"Poverty sleeps and sleeps, it stays stagnant."*

In addition some women in Faux-a-Chaux, Balca and Park Estate were of the view that place of residence was an important factor in defining poverty and some of the women also felt that having large numbers of children contributed to poverty.

*"If you live in a place with nothing ... what do you expect? Poverty."*

*"Women cannot afford contraceptives so they cannot space their children, then the baby comes and the cycle of poverty continues."*

For many women unemployment and lack of job opportunities not only keep them in poverty, but limit their ability to provide for their children, and lack of child care facilities prevent some from seeking employment.

*"I can't get a job, and I have five children."*

*"I am unemployed and I live in a house with ten children."*

*"I have eight children and my boyfriend does not work everyday."*

*"I am a mother but I cannot give my children the type of life I would like."*

*"I have strength to work, but I not getting work. A day here and a day there is not enough."*

*"If you don't work you don't get money."*

*"It eh easy to wake up in the morning and don't have a cent to send the children to school."*

*"I do not go and look for work cause I don't have anybody to look after my children."*

Among the women who were interviewed and who participated in the focus group discussions, some had part time domestic jobs, a small number were employed as cleaners in government or private firms, however they were all were working in unskilled low paying jobs for wages that were too small to meet even basic needs and in some cases their labour was being exploited.

*"I do tiling but people do not want to pay me \$1.25 per tile, they want to pay 95cents. I have to pay someone to bring sand for me out of that. I can't make it."*

*"Women salaries are too low we are taken advantage of."*

*"Some of us are not paid for overtime, the government needs to put something in place to deal with this."*

Some women saw prostitution as an economic activity and admitted that they would do anything, including prostitute themselves, to feed their children.

*"I do anything I can get, cleaning, washing, selling things....."*

*"To support their children women will go out and do things that they would not do otherwise."*

*"Women have to 'make bucket' to support their children."*

*"I prefer doing prostitution than stealing."*

*"You hungry and you will starve instead of giving him sex?"*

*"Without money, you keep passing from man to man, child after child... you can get AIDS so."*

Several women were of the view that poverty affects women more than men, especially women who were single parents and grandmothers who were solely responsible for the welfare of their children and grandchildren.

*"As a single parent life is extra hard."*

*"It is not easy to live as a single parent and feed your children."*

*"When there is no food it is you the children watch in your eyes."*

All of the women were concerned about being able to feed their children to provide health care and to send them to school, and while they saw education as a way of moving out of poverty, for many the cost of education is prohibitive.

*"I have no job so I can't provide for the children."*

*"It is painful, I can't feed the children."*

*"I do not make a big salary, \$400.00 is not enough to meet my needs. I have a child with epilepsy and medical attention is very costly."*

*"The only thing to change the cycle of poverty is education, but the cost of education is too high."*

*"I want my son to do CXC but I don't have the money for CXC"*

*"I struggle to send my children to school everyday and I feel proud when they do good."*

At the same time several women were concerned about the absence of reliable transportation and about the effect that this has on their ability to access health care. This was of particular concern of women in Des Barras and Park Estate. *"We don't have a bus, sometimes the children miss test because they can't get to school"*

*"I was going to St Judes to deliver my baby but since public transport doesn't service the community I had to walk to the Saltibus Junction to get a transport. On the way I started having serious pain so my mother brought me back home. A few minutes after I got home I give birth to my baby girl."*

Several women shared their experience of not receiving any support from their children's fathers, and for some this was a major factor that contributed to them being poor and living in poverty.

*"Men not supporting the children."*

*"I have no support from my child father."*

*"Women have to be both mother and father."*

*"I have ten children and I don't get support from none of the fathers."*

*"When you raising children with no support from the fathers you find yourself deeper in poverty."*

But some were aware that some fathers were unemployed and therefore could not provide for their children.

*"Feed their children? How can he feed the children if he have no job?"*

*"When he get a job he will give something."*

At the same time many saw dependency on men as a strategy for survival and for financial support.

*"I have one child and it hard, I depend on my boyfriend."*

*"I don't have any papers, I can't get a job, so my boyfriend takes care of me."*

*"My situation would improve if I get a boyfriend."*

Women were aware that poverty also affects relationships in the family.

*"Poverty affects happiness in the home."*

*"Poverty causes problems between husbands and wives, puts one against the other."*

*"It aggravates the family"*

*"Husbands and wives get into argument when the man drinks and leaves the bills not paid."*

*"The child father only feed him if he get sex."*

*"Men take advantage, they want you to have sex with them before they give you anything."*

*"Poverty makes women angry and they pass on their anger to the children."*

Although a few of the women did say that domestic violence and abuse of women existed in their communities, the majority were reluctant to discuss this issue, either because it was "hidden" and they were unaware of its existence or because of the importance placed on religion in some of the communities.

Women's physical and mental health is also affected by poverty. Early pregnancy, multiple pregnancies, poor diet, inability to access or afford health services, and the stress and anxiety of having sole responsibility for their families all take a toll on their health. In addition the health of those who are victims of abuse and domestic violence, and those who have multiple sexual partners or are engaged in the sex trade, is threatened.



Poverty also has a psychological effect on women and on their emotions. Many said that it contributed to low self esteem and several reported suffering from stress and depression, and of being sad and angry.

*"When I look in the mirror I see I poor."*

*"Lack of self esteem, it make you feel like nothing."*

*"Poverty degrades and demeans you as a person."*

*"Sometimes I feel I going crasy."*

*"I feel that I am nothing."*

*"Some women are so stress out that they cannot do anything"*

*"When you can't make ends meet you can go off."*

*"Some women undress themselves when they are quarrelling."*

*"When you poor and you have pride, its worse, you don't want to beg so you stay without."*

*"How can you feel right when your friends have a church shoe and you have a Bata?"*

*"Poverty produces risks and insecurity."*

The question of relationships with other women was also discussed and while in some communities women recognised the need to work together and to help each other, in others relationships among women were characterised by friction, jealousy, arguments and quarrels.

#### **2.4.2.2 Survival and Coping Strategies**

Among the survival and coping strategies are religion and faith in God, odd jobs, backyard gardening, dependency men, on neighbours or on charitable organisations, and on remittances. Some share resources and some who cannot provide for their children may "give them away" or send them to family members or neighbours. However most women make do with what they have, budget carefully, and only buy essentials.

*"We pray to God."*

*"Poor people turn to religion for spiritual assistance."*

*"I do the best I can with what I have."*

*"I make ends meet."*

*"You have to struggle and budget what you have."*

*"Neighbours help out sometimes, but you can't keep asking and asking."*

#### **2.4.2.3 Needs**

Women's priority needs are money and financial support, jobs and opportunities to work for better pay, a minimum wage, markets for their agricultural produce and craft items, and education programmes including adult literacy and skills training.

#### **2.4.3 Children and Youth**

In twelve of the communities separate discussions were held with children under 14 years and with young people 15 to 25 years of age. In three communities discussions were held with youth only and in two with children only.

Over five hundred children and youth, one hundred and twenty boys, and 108 girls, and 87 young men and 75 young women participated in the focus group discussions.

### **2.4.3.1 The Children**

The discussions with children not only yielded specific information about their experience of being poor and about how they feel about living in poverty, but they provided deep insights into how poverty affects and impacts on them.

### **2.4.3.2 Perception, Experience and Effect of Poverty**

For many children poverty meant not getting enough food and not being able to get things that they needed and wanted when they needed them. Many of the children felt that being poor when you are young is worse because parents have no money to give you what they need, other children pick on you, call you names and make jokes about you. This causes some of them not to want to go to school.

*"My family is poor and it is hard for a young girl "*

*"My belly boils, we don't always have food, I am always hungry."*

*"When you see something you cannot afford it the children cut style on you at school."*

*"Some children eat out of the bin."*

*"If we did not have so many children my life would be easier."*

*"Neither my mother or father working"*

*"Most of us are accustomed to not having anything."*

When some mothers don't have they send the children to ask their fathers, but absent fathers and fathers who were not working also cannot provide for them.

*"Me I don have no father eh."*

*"My mother alone I seeing, I never see a father yet."*

*"It is no use asking my father, because he don't have money either, he not working."*

Many of the Children said that they did not like living in their communities, they hated the dirtiness, the closeness of the houses, and the constant quarrelling. They were also concerned about alcoholism and about the amount of illegal drugs in their communities. However while some children in the urban communities disliked the police presence and actions, others in some of the rural communities felt that the police was not doing enough to patrol the ghettos where weed was being smoked and sold.

*"The youth sit on the block and smoke and sell weed."*

*"They smoke near the school and we inhale the smoke. It is bad for our health."*

*"The police need to patrol the ghettos where they smoke the weed and sell it."*

The children valued education and saw it as a way for moving out of poverty, however absence of day nurseries and preschool in some communities and parent's inability to pay for these even when there are available, means that many young children are not adequately prepared for

entry into primary school. At the same time absence of electricity, telephones, computers, internet affects children's performance in school and limits their ability to do homework especially if it includes research on the internet. In addition their school performance is often affected by parents' inability to afford lunch, transportation, school books and other vital supplies.

*"We use candles but it hurts my eyes, they burning me."*

*"Some children have to drop out of school at 12 and 13."*

*"No money to buy books or medicine and we can't go anywhere."*

*"I can't concentrate at school."*

*"I don't go to school every day, my mother don't have the money for lunch or bus fare." I*

*"Even if I do well at school I will not stand out because I don't have any money and that is how people view you."*

They expressed how being poor makes them feel and how it affects their relationships with their parents and with other people including their peers.

*"Children are neglected, parents don't pay attention to them."*

*"Poverty makes parents quarrel with their children."*

*"You feel as though your parents hate you."*

*"People treat you like you are nothing"*

*"I don't want people to tell me I am poor, it like living on the street."*

*"It makes me feel melancholy."*

*"I feel ashamed."*

*"I feel bad, disappointed and unimportant"*

*"I feel sad and angry because people don't care."*

A Few were concerned about becoming pregnant or victims of sexual abuse and incest they were aware that adults who should be protecting them can abuse them.

*"Poverty leads to teenage pregnancy, teenagers make children that they can't take care of."*

*"If you left home with a stepfather who is abusive it is a problem."*

*"Your mother may not believe you."*

#### **2.4.3.3 Survival Strategies**

While some poor children do receive help from neighbours, friends and family, in order to survive others may have to beg and to earn money by doing odd jobs

*"Children go to the jetty and dive for money when the boats come in."*

*"They beg you for some of your lunch."*

They also admitted that in order to survive children or other family members may become involved in illegal activities including stealing, crime and drug trafficking.

*"Our families gamble, and when they win they are able to buy milk, fish, flour....."*

*"No money to go to school so they drop out and deal in drugs."  
"Some children even sell drugs to get school books."*

### **2.4.3.4 Concerns and Needs**

Children need a nurturing and happy home environment with parents who care about and for them, enough food and regular nutritious meals, and to be able to go to school everyday and perform well. However, many children in the communities studied were not living in such an environment, had been born into poverty and were therefore at a severe disadvantage when compared with their non-poor peers. Several not only said that they were always hungry, but they were about their home environment in which confusion, quarrelling, fighting and arguments were common. Many were also very concerned about alcoholism and the use of illegal drugs, and said that they needed more recreational facilities.

### **2.4.4 The Youth**

#### **2.4.4.1 Perception, Experience and Effect of Poverty**

Many of the young people who participated in the activities of the PPA have grown up and are caught in the cycle of poverty, are very clear about what it means to be poor and are they are aware that being poor not only affects the situation in which they live but that it affects them physically and mentally and determines their life chances.

*"Poverty is a burden, it just happens to you."  
"Poverty is a chain cycle."  
"Poverty is being financially disabled."  
"Poverty has a physical and mental part."  
"Poverty is a state of mind."  
"Although we born poor we don't have to tell ourselves we poor."*

Young people in some of the communities differentiated between absolute and relative poverty and were of the view that when compared to others once they could get something to eat and the things they needed they were not poor.

*I don't think we have poverty"  
"I don't see myself as poor because if I hungry I can eat fruits or get a plate of food from my friend."  
"So long you can eat and drink you not poor"  
"I may not be poor but many people are."  
"What we need we can get."*

However they were also aware that some people were born into poverty while others 'fall into poverty', and they recognised that several young people were caught in the cycle of poverty, that the effect on them was devastating, and that many were disenchanted.

*"The way I look at it, poverty is a cycle. Some people born in poverty and very few get out of it."*

*"Poverty is about violence"*

*"Poverty is like a cancer, it's a vicious circle."*

*"One of the vicious circles is incest."*

*"If you tell yourself you poor then you live it. You become a victim of that poverty."*

According to them several factors contributed to and perpetuated the cycle of poverty. Among these were attitude, lack of resources, absence of educational and job opportunities, and for some, lack of ambition and unwillingness to take the jobs that may be available.

*"If you tell yourself you poor then you live it. You become a victim of that poverty."*

*"They don't want certain jobs, they have a lot of pride and prefer to stay without."*

*"They have no ambition, they want to be spoon fed."*

*"Although we born poor we don't have to tell ourselves we poor."*

Some of the youth were part of large families and commented on the environment in which they and some of their peers grew up. They expressed concern about the number of children that poor people had and about their reluctance to go to family planning programmes and to ask for contraceptives. Some were of the view that contraceptives should not only be free, but that they should be given to people at their homes.

*"Parents not creating a positive environment for children most children grow up in a degrading environment"*

*"You have to go to make contraceptives free, go to their homes and talk to them and give them condoms, people feel ashamed to go and ask."*

*"There are more young mothers now even though birth control is available. Young people not going to the health centre because of insufficient education and fear."*

*"Young men do not go to the health centre or make use of the services available."*

Young people recognise the importance of education and see it as a strategy for escaping from poverty but several of them had been able to pursue, complete or benefit from their education because their were poor and their parents lacked the financial resources needed for food, transportation, books and examination fees.

*"Education is the key."*

*"I need to get a better education but where to get the money from?"*

*"The ideal is to go to school, but that is not always realistic many have to stop at primary school."*

*"That is why a lot of children, especially boys drop out, they don't have the money to go to school."*

Several were also of the view that the education system and the irrelevance of the curriculum have contributed to their inability to get a job, to move out of poverty and to function effectively in community life.

*"The school curriculum leads to poverty".*

*"I trained but the training did not help me to get a job."*

*"We are taught subjects that are of no use to us in real life or in our communities."  
"Education but no employment leads to crime."  
"Our system does not equip people with a skill."  
"Subjects such as arts, plumbing, carpentry and mechanics should be introduced in schools."  
"The academic level of youth in the ghetto too low. You have to do book keeping."  
"I leave school and apply for a job, but they tell you they want experience."  
"Go to school and learn, what's the point if at the end there is nothing."*

Unemployment is high among the youth and several complain of not being able to get jobs and even if they do manage to get a job, the pay is so low that it is insufficient.

*"The main problem is unemployment, not enough jobs."  
"If you check my pocket you getting cobwebs."  
"When you go for a job they ask you how much paper you have."  
"Now at JQ to pack things on shelves you need CXC, but to get CXC you need money."  
"You work hard for no money, they paying you \$120.00 a fortnight."  
"Even though you get a job, the money is not enough even to pay the bus fare to get to work."*

Young people also lamented the absence of facilities, activities and programmes for youth and said that this was one of the reasons why they got involved in illegal activities.

*"There is nothing for young people to do here so the guys just hang around and smoke and the girls talk people business."  
"Where are the programmes for young people?"  
"Young people need more things put in place for them."  
"There are no recreational facilities, the playing field not good, it full of grass."  
"There is little or no support for young people, the government does little, the District Representative does little".  
"There is not enough help for people who want to get out of poverty."*

Poverty is affecting young people in a number of ways. Their self esteem is low, they feel inadequate, worthless, unimportant, helpless and disenchanting.

*"You feel inadequate, frustrated and depressed because you can't change your situation."  
"Poverty is like a cycle it makes you feel so low you cannot move through society."  
"Once I got up and realised that poverty was hitting me."  
"Poverty is taking a toll on me and I don't see how it is going to end."  
"We are tired of the talk. I have heard of poverty assessments but nothing ever happens, nothing don't change."*

Such feelings result not only from attitudes of their peers and of people in their communities and the wider society but sometimes are the outcomes of how they are treated and what they are told by parents.

*"As young people it is not good to be poor your self esteem is affected because people look down on you and treat you differently. It is not a good feeling."*

*"I wasted all my money on you and you are not doing anything. If I knew I should have killed you in the passage."*

Statements like these are not only degrading but have a serious negative effect on their self esteem and sense of worth, and several of them indicated that poverty creates conflict in the home because their parents are not able to meet their demands. This conflict also leads to breakdown in relationships

*"Male female relationships are strained and families are breaking up."*

*"The quarrels and fights affect the children."*

*"Poverty can break down relationships."*

*"Poverty leads to stress and brings confusion in the family."*

*"I have no resources, I have to carry water, I work hard but when my boyfriend comes home he gets mad and I end up being abused."*

Poverty also leads young people to become involved in illegal and criminal activities. Several admitted to using and selling drugs, and to being involved in gangs and crime and saw these activities as providing them with the money they needed to get the things they wanted.

*"Lack of jobs causes loitering and gives young people time to commit crime."*

*"Some join gangs for the drugs and money it brings."*

*"If you rob someone you could get \$600.00. That would buy food."*

*"Most young people want nice clothes and shoes so they may resort to stealing and prostitution."*

*"Some people make money by selling the weed."*

They also said that poverty can lead teenage girls to early pregnancies and prostitution with the risk of contacting sexually transmitted infections and diseases.

*"Poverty can lead to teenage pregnancy. Girls sell their body to get what they want and end up pregnant."*

*"Poverty affects most teenagers here they end up doing prostitution or drugs."*

*"There is a lot of teenage pregnancy."*

*"I got pregnant in form 4."*

*"Many young girls never finish school they sleep with men to take care of their children."*

*"They are at risk of getting sexually transmitted infections."*

Given the number of young people who are engaging in risky sexual activity, some groups expressed concern about the risks to which they were exposed, including teenage pregnancy, contracting STIs, and HIV/AIDS. While little information was offered on the incidence of HIV/AIDS, there was much discussion about family planning, about the use of contraceptives, and about whether family planning programmes were reaching young people. Discussion with several young women also revealed a variety of myths about contraceptive use and a few

admitted that their boyfriends did not want them to use contraceptives. At the same time there was a recognition that young men do and/or will not go to health clinics.

*"Me and my boyfriend not doing nothing, so I won't get pregnant."*

*"Contraceptives will make me get fat."*

*"They does give you cancer."*

*"My boyfriend say I not to use contraceptives."*

#### **2.4.4.2 Survival and Coping Strategies**

Some of the young people still live at home with their mothers/parents, some may receive assistance from family or friends, some set up "Iratons", make shift stalls and sell vegetarian fast foods, some of the young men join gangs and do drugs for the money it brings, and some of the girls may become involved in the sex trade. Some said they would do anything including beg and steal, and while some realised that they had to make sacrifices some said that they did not know how they were surviving and some just accepted their situation.

*"I still live with my mom and she helping me with the baby."*

*"I will do everything in my power to make sure I am not poor."*

*"We are not coping we taking chances."*

*"I charge my boyfriend \$50.00 for a massage, he has to pay me for everything I do for him."*

*"I get high like a kite to touch the sky."*

*"We make major sacrifices."*

*"I can't cope, I stress out, I don't know how I survive."*

*"Young people leave the community. They go to Castries to look for opportunities, jobs and entertainment."*

#### **2.4.4.3 Concerns and Needs**

Some of the young people were concerned about the level of crime in their communities and felt that in order to discourage young people from becoming involved in crime and other illegal activities. They were of the view that stricter laws and stiffer prison sentences were not effective deterrents.

*"Passing tougher legislation is not the right way to address crime."*

*"We need to see a documentary on prison life to discourage young people from crime."*

Some young people are also concerned about their future and that of their children.

*"My concern is if I have children in the future how it would turn out for them."*

And many identified the need for resources, for sporting facilities and activities, and for education and skills training programmes, and saw these as important for the long term development of young people.

*"More resources like a training centre for skills development."*

*"A pitch on the field and equipment like goal posts."*



*"Have free programmes at affordable prices."  
"Need for programmes to foster better parenthood."  
"We need more social activities."  
"Establish youth groups."  
"We need recreational facilities."  
"We need sponsorship."  
"Not a one time thing, training and empowerment so that people can do something in the long run."*

## **2.4.5 The Unemployed**

Approximately one hundred and fifty unemployed persons between the ages of 19 and 60 years of age participated in the focus group discussions and just over half of these were women. A significant number of the unemployed were young people between the ages of 19 and 35 and the majority had only a primary school education and few marketable skills. While lack of qualifications is a key factor in determining whether an individual can get a job as well as the type of job that persons can get, age is also a factor.

### ***2.4.5.1 Perception, Experience and Effect of Poverty***

The majority of people who participated saw unemployment, their inability to get a job and to earn income, as the main reasons why they were poor.

*"Unemployment is a factor that contributes to poverty."  
"Poverty is no work, no money, you can't buy any stuff."  
"Next month will be a year since I not working."  
"I have nothing and my husband does not work."*

Many of those who lived in rural communities where bananas had been the primary source of jobs and income blamed the decline in the industry for their situation and their being poor.

*"Since banana decline there is no work."  
"When there was banana there was money, but that ain't so now."  
"In the years of banana the Danes used to employ people to work on the land. Now we cannot get work."  
"Now where is banana?"*

Unemployed people recognised that being employed was essential in order to meet basic needs and they lamented the absence of job opportunities and their inability to obtain permanent employment.

*"There is no work."  
"I am poor I am not working so I cannot meet my needs and the needs of my family."  
"It's not easy coming out of school and can't get a job."  
"You feel down when you see others going to work."  
"A little bit of money once in a while but employment is lacking."*

*"Lack of job opportunities."*

*"I need a job."*

*"If I did not have child I would not need a job."*

*To meet your basic needs you need a job."*

While lack of qualifications is a key factor in determining whether an individual can get a job as well as the type of job that they unemployed persons can get, age is also a factor. Consequently the need for a job and an income may make them do whatever is required to get a job of whatever kind. This can and has on occasion left them vulnerable and open to discrimination and exploitation by potential employers and several participants shared experiences of being abused and exploited.

*"When you in crisis and things rough you must take whatever thy give you."*

*"When you go to look for a job they ask for certificates, but I don't have any."*

*"My age is a barrier to get a job, every time I go for a job they ask me my age and when I tell them they say they need a younger person."*

*"At work the boss abuses you,"*

*"For you to get a job you have to sleep with the boss."*

*"It is a job we want that's why we have sex."*

*"A fella can't get work, but a girl with long hair, short skirts and high heels are getting the job."*

*"I can't get a hole in STEP, it's the same people all the time who get work in STEP."*

Some of the participants did say that they may sometimes get part time jobs or a job in the STEP and for some including hotel and construction workers, employment is seasonal. At the same time many said that the jobs that they did get paid very low wages that are insufficient to meet the high prices of the things they need.

*"I work for the government as a caretaker, but only for five months in the year."*

*"As a mother, sometimes I sell peanuts and farine, I made a few dollars at Creole Day."*

*"I do anything with my hands to make a dollar."*

*"The price of things increase so I can't afford."*

*"The little money I get cannot buy the medicine."*

*"The little money my husband makes is not enough to send the children to school. Some had to leave because of that."*

Unemployment and underemployment have a serious effect on individuals, on their relationships and on their families. Individual men and women who have no jobs and who cannot find work, who only work for short periods of time or only at certain times of the year, who do not earn an income or whose wages are small, are unable to provide the basic needs for themselves and their families. This situation not only deprives them and their family from enjoying a good quality of life and sense of well being but it erodes their self concept and makes them feel inadequate and leads to frustration and depression. In addition it prevents them from achieving their goals and aspirations.

*"I wanted to be a nurse but I had no money and I have no job, I have three children and it really had to support them."*

*"You cannot make long term plans."*

*"It is difficult to see others getting pay on a Friday and you have nothing."*

Being unemployed and poor also affects families and relationships between family members.

*"Both of you in the home not working, so one goes out and meets someone one who can support them, and this affects the existing relationship."*

*"When you not working, you can't go anywhere, you can't enjoy yourself and sometime it affects your relationships."*

*"Poverty has an impact on my family. I worry about my children I cannot buy books for them."*

#### **2.4.5.2 Survival and Coping Strategies**

Many unemployed people do a variety of odd jobs including weeding, cleaning, vending and car washing, but many depend on help from others and some use what they have wisely or stay without so that they can give to their children. Some said that they pray and rely on God, but some, mainly the younger ones, migrate.

*"When I am working I help my sister and when I am not she helps me."*

*"Sometimes I leave a bill behind to get things for the children."*

*"When better can't be done worse has to continue."*

*"You do the best you can and keep on praying, God will help."*

*"I make coal, if I wasn't poor I wasn't doing that."*

*"People migrate, they get frustrated and leave the community."*

#### **2.4.5.3 Concerns and Needs**

Unemployed persons are concerned about their survival and how to provide for their families. They need jobs as well as opportunities to obtain or create employment. Some people would also like to start their own small business but they have no capital.

*"The only thing I need is a job."*

*"I sick I need \$25,000.00 for surgery but I don't know where I will get it from."*

*"We need assistance to send our children to secondary school."*

*"We need help with self employment."*

*"We need loans to start our own businesses."*

#### **2.4.6 The Elderly and Persons with Disabilities**

A small number of elderly persons and persons with disabilities were interviewed as heads of their households, and in most of the communities focus group discussions were organised to include elderly persons as well as persons with disabilities. In some cases, because of challenges being faced by the latter, discussions took place at someone's home. A total of 132 persons participated in the discussions. The majority was over 65 years of age and about two

thirds were women. Among those who participated were widows and widowers, physically challenged persons and persons who were parents of children, including adult children with disabilities. Many of them had only had a primary education and a few had not been to school at all. A few were still engaged in subsistence farming on a small scale but most were unemployed and had no regular source of income.

#### ***2.4.6.1 Perception, Experience and Effect of Poverty***

Several elderly persons admitted to being poor and provided reasons for their condition. Among these were: age and the inability to work, ill health or sickness, responsibility for supporting children, including children with disabilities, or grandchildren, lack of support by adult children and lack of access to resources.

*"Ten years ago I was only fifty and I could do a day's work, now I cannot so it is harder."*

*"I know poverty well."*

*"Life was not always so with me. It worse now I old."*

*"I was a fisherman but now I can do nothing."*

*"My husband used to work in bananas, but he dead."*

*"I have no money and I cannot work"*

*"Poverty is when you sick and have nothing."*

*"A lot of us used to do subsistence farming but now we are older we cannot."*

*"When I was young I worked but there was no provision for social security."*

Several older persons although they have no income are still responsible for the welfare of children and grandchildren.

*"My children cannot help me they have no jobs I have to help them with their children."*

*"When you have children you have to take care of them till you dead."*

Many older persons and persons with disabilities are living in poor conditions, small houses badly in need of repair and without adequate furniture and amenities like water, toilet and bath, and while some may have electricity, they are unable to pay the bill.

*"My house falling down."*

*"Some old people have no pipe borne water and no toilet in their house. There should be free connection and access to water and electricity."*

*"My latrine and kitchen need fixing."*

*"When I wake up all under my house flooded."*

*"All the plywood in my house collapsing."*

*"I have nothing in my house, no stove, no fridge, nothing."*

A significant number of older persons are not in good health. Elderly women as well as elderly men suffer from diabetes, and hypertension and alcoholism, rheumatism, arthritis, asthma, eye problems are common. A few men suffer from prostate cancer. All complained about the high cost of health care and the difficulties they experience in accessing health services.

*"I have no money and I cannot work so I can't get my medication."*

*"I need to check the doctor every three months, the doctor is free but you have to pay for the medicine."*

*"Medication is so expensive I need \$90.00 every month to buy medicine."*

*"I am diabetic but the road is bad so it take me over six months to see a doctor sometimes I wish I could walk."*

*"I have to buy medicine for my husband but it is so expensive, one pill for \$6.00 that I had to leave it."*

*"When the ambulance come if you don't have an exemption card you have to pay. It is time that things are put in place to help us."*

Older persons feel lonely, depressed, unhappy, angry and sad. Some feel neglected, ignored and abandoned. They talked about children who do not care about or for them, the lack of respect shown by young people and quite a few while sharing their experience ended up in tears.

*"My husband died last year we had no children, I am left alone I have no one and I can't walk."*

*"Nobody cares."*

*"Nobody offers me a cup of tea."*

*"I gave the country nine children, I worked for the government, and now I am old I have nothing, I get nothing."*

*"When I was young I worked but there was no provision for social security."*

*"I am not working nor is my wife. We don't see the children at all and we don't get any assistance from government."*

*"My wife's son lives with us but give no support."*

*"I am alone in the house, I have nobody to talk to I want people to visit me."*

*If I had money I would not be lonely."*

*"I do not get assistance from my children overseas."*

*"Young people nowadays don't respect or care about older persons."*

*"In the community there is no respect for older persons, they act like they want to throw us away."*

*"Young people say they have their life to live so they don't have time for old people."*

Another problem that many older persons face is lack of access to transportation and this affects their mobility and their ability to access facilities and services. In some cases to get blood, urine and stool tests they may have to go to Castries, and no consideration is taken of the problems they experience in getting transportation.

*"We have to go to town for the tests, but we are too old to take the bus and then walk in town, they should be available at the health centre."*

*"Sometimes the bus drivers don't want to stop for us, they pass us by."*

*"When we take the bus into town they drive fast and play loud music."*

*"We need a bus to take older people to town so we don't have to go through this all the time."*

Persons with disabilities and elderly persons who have to care for them feel the pain of poverty keenly. There is little respect for persons with disabilities and they may lose their self esteem and dignity.

*"No respect for the disabled, they throw stones at us."*

*"Some people call us nicknames and abuse us."*

*"We are ignored people are not interested in us."*

*"We have a disabled group and we invited the District Representative to our meetings but he never came."*

Such persons have few resources and there are few facilities that cater to their needs.

*"I am disabled, I am sick and I am old my mother used to take care of me but she died earlier this year and I don't have any family left. I have no one I have nothing I don't have electricity or water, Sometimes I so sick if I try to get off the bed I just fall so I have to stay in bed. I don't know why God put me on earth."*

*"The poorest person is this physically challenged boy in the wheel chair. He has to depend on someone for every thing he needs."*

*"The water truck brings water but I cannot run to get any."*

*"Please see after this physically challenged man. Please help him, he needs help."*

Several older people were concerned that while they were being ignored, a lot of emphasis is being placed on the youth. They felt that older persons still had a lot to offer society in terms of talents, skills and experience, and that they needed to be valued.

*"We have no voice, no rights."*

*"Old people are left out of politics. They keep saying the youth, the youth, but they need old people to vote."*

*"Old people have a lot of talent and experience that should be used."*

*"Many old people can do things, they have talent, they have experience, the young people can learn from us."*

#### **2.4.6.2 Survival and Coping Strategies**

While a small number of elderly persons do receive some public assistance and while they agreed that the amounts received \$80.00 per month was insufficient to buy food and medicine and to pay bills, for some this is their only source of income.

*"I have asked to be placed on the paupers list."*

*"Pension is from hand to mouth since it so small and not increasing."*

*"The amount I receive from the government is not enough."*

*"The public assistance small but without it I would be worse off."*

Some depend on children family members or neighbours, and some feeling helpless and unable to do anything except their situation

*"I am dependent on my children."  
"If I have nothing neighbours will give me."  
"I living on the good I did when I was young."  
"We have no choice."  
"I am accustomed to it."  
"From the time I born, I learnt to face it."  
"I cannot cope, I need help."*

#### **2.4.6.3 Concerns and Needs**

There is a grave concern about the plight of the elderly and about persons with disabilities. The lack of a regular and study income, the small amount of money that a few receive from the government, their inability to eat balanced meals and regularly, their poor health, isolation and social exclusion are issues that need urgent attention.

*"Most of us not getting any money from the government."  
"When you have diabetes you cannot eat a lot of things, green fig and other starchy foods. I ask the doctor what I suppose to eat, how am I suppose to live."  
"Need to organise a way for elderly people to get a meal and something to drink each day. That will help a lot."  
"Lonely, no one to talk or to care....."*

Other concerns identified include the absence of legislation to protect the rights of the elderly persons and persons with disabilities, lack of education and training opportunities, of recreational and economic activities and of markets for things that they might make and absence of facilities to provide care.

*"We want the government to pass legislation to protect the rights of older persons and disabled persons."  
"We need to train the elderly and the disabled so they can continue to contribute to the society."  
"Why don't they organise some recreational and economic activities for older persons?"  
"Older persons make baby bags and quilts, but there are no markets for these things."*

### **BOX 2.3: MARVIS, THE ELDERLY**

*Mavis is 94 years of age. She lives by herself in a small wooden house. The house shares the same space with two or three other dwellings. The house belongs to her but she rents the land on which it sits for EC\$10 per month from a prominent family in the community. It has no kitchen or toilet. The latter facility is lacking in two thirds of the households in this community. Like all of the elderly interviewed in this community, she uses a bucket which is emptied for her by someone in the community. As the interview is being conducted Mavis goes about her chores, in this instance preparing lunch. She goes about her task conscientiously moving about in a nimble way that belies her age and the fact that she is completely blind.*

*"Of all the sicknesses you can get in your old age", Mavis says, "pray that you never get blindness." Mavis says she has been blind since 1960. It happened in stages. It started when she used to work on the sugar estate for the "white people" for \$1 per load of cane carried. One day as she was attempting to lift a load of cane the strap that bound the cane burst and hit her in her eye. She never received any compensation, but eventually took an operation. However she gradually lost sight in her eyes until sometime later she lost her sight completely. The lady who takes care of her reports that Mavis never made an issue of the accident. Furthermore, when she took the operation Mavis is said to have disregarded the doctor's advice regarding care of herself during the healing process. The rationale for this though is that because she was poor Mavis had to continue working and doing chores even though she was supposed to be resting. Mavis reports that she worked at the Police station in the community after her accident and up until the time that she lost her sight.*

*Mavis is feisty and fiercely independent. She used to live with a woman who took care of her, but could not stand to be dependent on others for everything. Furthermore she felt the things that people gave her such as groceries were being taken by the people taking care of her. She eventually decided to leave and come on her own to the place where she presently resides.*

*Mavis has one child, a male. The father of that child had children with other women. He is now deceased. Her son lives in the U.K. Mavis mourns his absence and the fact that they are not communicating. This is in spite of the fact that she has a telephone and has asked him to call. He occasionally sends 20 pounds for her the last occasion being on Christmas. The story is told that their estrangement stems from the fact that on the last occasion that her son visited Mavis from the U.K. He did so on the basis of her assurance that she had money. On arrival in the district he discovered that all she had was EC\$200.00. This left him financially embarrassed and having to resort to loans from the neighbour. Mavis cries when she speaks of her son and how she misses him... She says that if she does not see him she will die. She laments that when there is rain and thunder and lightening she is all alone. Her son is reported to be a 70+ year old U.K. pensioner.*

*Mavis receives EC\$85 per month from the government. She also receives donations made by any charitable organisation that might be passing through the area. Finally she receives food and care from friends in the community. A friend buys coal for her to cook with and water for domestic use. She also has a couple of relatives who pass by to help her out or ask someone to do so. Still, it is obvious that she feels lonely and neglected. She cries when she recalls that there are young people around that she cared for when she was younger, but today because she is old and nobody is taking care of her. She is blind and nobody is taking care of her. Nobody knows her they have to see some misery before anyone pays her attention. Today she is poor and old nobody pays any attention to her.*

*She expresses thankfulness for the fact that her blindness was not a result of her taking somebody's man. "I got blind through working and thank God for that. I have one child and that child is not taking care of me, but thank God I am alive today". One of her caregivers reports that a part of the reason why not many people come around is that Mavis' tongue is very sharp and accusatory. She (the care giver) started taking care of Mavis when one day she told her she was hungry. An immediate neighbour also takes care of her, but Mavis sometimes quarrels with her. Mavis is described as not being grateful and thankful for what people do on her behalf. Mavis receives medical care from the local clinic.*



## **2.5 TRENDS AND ISSUES**

Analysis of the large amount of data collected in the PPA has revealed a number of trends and some key issues that must be addressed in order to improve living conditions of individuals and families living in poverty and to ensure that poverty alleviation programmes respond to and meet the specific needs of particular groups, and to reduce poverty.

### **2.5.1 Trends**

#### ***2.5.1.1 Economic Trends***

The economies of the majority of households in poor communities are very fragile with little disposable income, most of which is spent on food or used for paying bills. In some of the households interviewed one person was employed, in others one might have been employed part time or seasonally, and from time to time any or all persons in the household might be in a diverse number of income earning activities mostly in the informal economy.

The banana industry was once the main source of income for a significant number of households in the rural communities and whether individuals had been employed as farmers or as labourers, their place in the formal economy was assured. However, now that the industry has declined they have been displaced and their income source eroded, large numbers are now unemployed and have become poorer in the process. For them as well as for their families and communities this loss has resulted in less availability and circulation of cash, in many hardships and in greater poverty. At the same time, from the discussions it appears that not many of this group has benefited from attempts to diversify of the agriculture sector and although some admitted to being involved in some or other aspect of agriculture, their ability to generate income is sometimes hampered by the absence of markets for their produce. Unprepared and ill equipped for other jobs, many are finding it difficult to obtain meaningful or fulltime employment outside of the agriculture sector. However, some have become involved in a variety of non agricultural income earning activities in the informal sector.

Many residents in the urban communities are also involved in the informal economy and in all of the communities there is a noticeable growth of alternative economies. While this phenomenon appears to be more obvious and pronounced in the urban communities it is nevertheless also evident in nearly all of the communities studied. An important and potentially dangerous trend is the acceptance and dependence of a significant number of individuals and households on illegal activities as a source of income. Among such activities are drug trafficking, gambling, crime and the sex trade in which a significant number of unemployed youth are engaged.

Lack of schooling among older residents, non completion of formal education, and what some young persons see as the irrelevance of the school curriculum, have all contributed to low education levels and few marketable skills among residents in the communities studied. Consequently a significant number of those that are employed are in low skilled low paying jobs mainly in the public sector and in the construction industry.

Since income is one of the indicators used to measure household poverty, the link between level of education and employment and between this and household economies, education must be seen as an important strategy to reduce unemployment and under-employment and to increase the flow of financial resources from earned income to households.

Another trend is the exploitation of labour of poor individuals and the very low wages which they are paid. Many of the people, especially females, who participated in discussions, were of the view that minimum wage legislation was needed to break this trend.

### ***2.5.1.2 Social Trends***

The social fabric of a community determines to a large extent the sense of well being and the quality of life that its residents can enjoy. Several social problems were identified and were of concern of residents.

A growing trend that is of concern to residents in most of the communities is the breakdown in morals and values which according to them, has contributed to an increase in crime, drugs and other illegal activities, and to a lack of respect for law and order, and to the existence of relationships characterised by lack of respect, conflict, verbal and physical abuse, and violence.

Socialisation and child rearing practices have contributed to and determine parent-child relationships and children imitate and learn from a wide variety of adult role models. There is a grave concern about trends in parent-child relationships, the way that some children are being treated by adults, including their parents, about verbal and physical abuse of children, and about lack of supervision and neglect of children. At the same time there is also a concern about trends in the behaviour of children and about their involvement in undesirable, sometimes adult, activities. In many cases children's words and actions show their disrespect for adults, including their parents, their indiscipline, and their disregard for authority and delinquency.

Relationships between partners/spouses and between neighbours also displayed undesirable features including lack of communication and trust, jealousy, conflict, verbal and physical abuse, and violence.

Other important trends include the existence and use of illegal drugs, the acceptance of crime as a legitimate source of income and way of life, and violence, including gang warfare, as a mechanism for conflict resolution. These phenomena are now so common in many communities that their activities are not concealed anymore but are done quite openly. Some are of the view that unemployment, neglect of their communities by government, and poverty have contributed to the emergence of these trends. However, some residents in many of the communities are concerned about these phenomena and especially about their impact on young children and on the community as a whole.

While the culture in many of the communities is characterised by many negative trends and undesirable features, in several there is still some cooperation among individuals and households and several social and kinship networks provide support and assistance to kin and neighbours both in times of hardship and if the community is threatened.

Trends in education and health also provide clues about quality of life and the wellbeing of individuals, households and communities. In terms of the former there is definitely a trend that shows that people are aware of the important role that education can play and believe that it is the key to break the cycle poverty. Primary education is universal, there is a trend towards universal secondary education, and there are many opportunities for children and adults to pursue education, so in theory St Lucia is well on the way to achieving MDG#2.

However at the level of the households interviewed, there are indications of the ways in which lack of education can contribute to the level of poverty being experienced. These include the fact that the majority of the household heads had only had primary education, and that many children were unable to make use of the available opportunities or to access and reap the full benefits of education because of lack of finance, and of their parents' ability to meet the costs of lunch, books, bus fare, and examination fees.

Another trend is the number of children who drop out of school, boys to be absorbed in the labour market, and girls because of pregnancy. While there is some provision for the latter to complete their education, information was not collected about the numbers that actually pursue this option or about male female performance. However there is a definite trend that shows that inability to complete school and to gain certificates and formal qualifications affected young people's ability to obtain employment.

Unemployment is usually regarded as an important factor that results in poverty and several young people identified a link between education level and unemployment. They believe that the school curriculum is irrelevant and that what they learn in school is not preparing them for the world of work. Therefore they feel that if this trend continues the difficulties they experience in obtaining employment will continue and prevent them from getting out of poverty.

Good health contributes to a sense of well being and the poor depend heavily on the existence, availability and quality of public health services. However while such services are widely available, emerging trends identified by some include inability to access and/or afford them and their quality. A trend that is of concern is the prevalence of lifestyle diseases, especially diabetes and hypertension and an increase of these in men as well as in women.

While very little concrete information was offered on STIs and HIV/AIDS, there was recognition that there is a trend, especially among young people, to engage in risky sexual behaviours and a concern about existence and prevalence of these diseases. Another worrying trend is attitudes to and use of contraceptives. Information provided during discussions and interviews revealed that young people are not using contraceptives. If these trends continue difficulties in combating HIV/AIDS and lowering the rate of teenage pregnancies will present challenges and obstacles that could prevent the achievement of MDG#6.

One positive trend is the apparent good health of most children, all of whom have been immunised and many of whom only suffer from colds, asthma, and other minor childhood ailments. However there are a few children with disabilities. The situation with older adults is quite different however. In addition arthritis and rheumatism, diseases associated with aging,

significant number of women as well as men reported that they suffered from diabetes and hypertension. One contributing factor to this trend in lifestyle diseases can be the poor diet and irregularity of balanced, nutritious meals to which many older persons admitted. There is also a concern about a trend in alcohol consumption and the incidence of alcoholism among men as well as in increasing number of older women.

One trend that was also identified and that was a matter of some concern was the plight and neglect of persons, especially of poor persons, with disabilities. While there appears to be greater recognition of their existence, continuing neglect of and lack of adequate response is evident in the scarcity of resources and facilities that are necessary to meet their special needs.

## **2.5.2 Issues**

### ***2.5.2.1 Poverty and Deprivation***

The data from the PPA clearly reveal the multi-dimensionality and complexity of poverty, the many contributing factors, and its impact on the lives of those who are deprived of even the basic necessities of life. All types, levels and aspects of poverty exist in the communities that were studied.

At the level of the household where the effects of poverty are most keenly felt, the poorest households were those in which successive generations had been poor and in which chronic poverty continued to be the norm and a way of life. Members of these households had inherited poverty and were locked in a cycle of poverty which many accepted and from which few saw any possibility or little hope of escaping. They were not only deprived of the basic necessities of food, shelter, clothing, and financial and material resources, but also of tangible and intangible assets that could be translated into consumption goods, claims, or investments to improve their situation in the present or future. In order to attain the first of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG#1) to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, poverty alleviation programmes must be designed to break this cycle of poverty by implementing programmes and activities that are designed to meet the needs of the poor and that will improve the conditions under which they live.

At the individual level, an important dimension of poverty is emotional and psychological poverty. Human beings need other human beings and they need to feel a sense of belonging and worth. Over and over again young as well as older individuals lamented the fact that “nobody seems to care”, and the data show that many of those living in poverty were being deprived of love and affection and that they felt that their concerns and needs were neither being taken seriously nor being given the consideration they deserved. Consequently their self esteem and self confidence were very low, they were demotivated and they experienced feelings of powerlessness, helplessness and hopelessness. A sense of fatalism was evident in their attitudes, speech and actions.

The data draw attention to the fact the poor are not a homogeneous group, and that different groups experience and feel the effects and impact of poverty in different ways depending on, among other things, their age, sex, and place of residence. Poverty alleviation programmes must therefore also take these factors into consideration.

The data also show that there is a definite and direct link between private poverty at the individual, household and group level and public poverty at the community level and that this dynamic is also a factor that determines the levels of deprivation that is experienced by residents in a community.

At the community level, while the communities studied were identified as being poor they too were not homogeneous and there were significant differences among and between them in terms of the types, levels and severity of poverty that they displayed. For example while all display some common features of deprivation like lack of facilities, there is a stark difference between poverty as it is experienced in urban and rural communities. Poor housing conditions and overcrowding is one such difference, being more evident in the former. Another is the impact of the displacement of former banana workers and the decrease in jobs in the agriculture sector in several of the rural communities. These differences have important implications for community residents and on their ability to enjoy an acceptable standard of living and quality of life.

Another aspect of community or public poverty is the state of the infrastructure and of the natural resources, and the availability of facilities and public services that residents can easily access and afford. In some urban as well as rural communities the infrastructure, including roads and drains, is poor, in others there are few facilities like water, electricity, telephones, health clinics, daycare centres or preschools, and in many residents are dissatisfied with the available public services. Neglect of communities was therefore seen by some residents as a factor that contributed to poor living conditions and perpetuated poverty. At the same time in communities where residents did have access to facilities and services the high cost of accessing these often prevented them from being able to benefit from them.

### ***2.5.2.2 Vulnerability***

Because it not only highlights the conditions under which specific groups of people live but identifies the extent to which and how these conditions contribute to deterioration in the quality of people's lives and to their sense of well being, vulnerability is a critical factor to be considered in assessing poverty. In the process of the PPA residents identified three groups which in their view were being most adversely affected by poverty and therefore vulnerable.

The first was children. According to the 2001 Population Census, well over two thousand children live in the communities that were studied and residents in most of the communities were of the view that children were the ones most affected by poverty. They admitted that children were at risk and that their livelihoods and life chances were limited, this in spite of the fact that most of the children were in relatively good health and that they had access to formal education. They pointed to children's dependency on parents who lacked the financial and other resources needed to meet children's basic need, especially for sufficient food and a

balanced diet. At the same time they saw parents' inability to send their children to school everyday and to pay examination fees as serious threats to children's life chances. In addition some observed that because of the social milieu in which some children were growing up their security was threatened and they were at risk of being abused and hurt. Parents' frustration and anger also often resulted in neglect, lack of supervision and in some cases in abandonment of children.

Because poor children deserve the same opportunities and chances of their non poor peers, poverty alleviation initiatives must target the former, must put mechanisms in place to improve the conditions under which they live and must provide them with the means to develop not only physically, but also emotionally and intellectually so that they may have a better chance of moving out of poverty.

The elderly is the second group that residents identified as being vulnerable. According to the 2001 Population Census there are about 450 persons over 65 years living in the communities studied, and while their numbers are smaller than those of children, their plight is one of concern. The data reveal two distinct groups, the younger elderly and the older elderly. Many of the former appear to be in fairly good health but are poor because they have no regular source of income and while they may still be able and willing to work, they are deemed too old to be employed and are dependent on others for their livelihoods. The latter group is especially vulnerable. The conditions under which they live are in most cases deplorable, their health shows signs of rapid deterioration and many of them are ill but most cannot access or afford good health care. They are ignored, neglected or abandoned by family, friends and the society as a whole and from the data it is evident that there are few, if any institutions that provide care for elderly persons.

There are some elderly persons who receive public assistance or social welfare but the small amount that they receive each month is insufficient to provide even the most basic need of enough food. Consequently many depend on the goodwill and assistance of friends and good neighbours for their survival. Many older persons also live alone and although there were no reported cases of abuse, their safety and security is at risk as they can become targets for attack.

Poverty alleviation programmes must therefore begin to pay attention to elderly persons who are living in poverty, all of whom would have contributed to society's development in their younger years, and some of whom have become poor as they aged. Steps must be taken to ensure that they are not excluded and ostracised because of their age but that they are allowed to grow old in dignity, to live in comfortable conditions, and to enjoy a good quality of life in their golden years.

The third group that residents indicated were being most affected by poverty was women, especially those who were single parents and who are totally responsible for the welfare of their families. However the data also revealed two other groups of women who are also totally responsible for the welfare of their families. Among these were grandmothers in multi-generational households and women in some nuclear households in which they were the ones earning an income and contributing to the household economy and their partners were not.

However the data show that the education level of these women is low, that most of them unemployed and have no access to a regular income, and that the incomes of the few who may be employed are very low. They face several challenges as they take risks and struggle to find the money needed to meet the basic needs of household members and this increases the possibility of them being exploited. At the same time these women are also responsible for providing child care for large numbers of children and in some nuclear and multigenerational households care of elderly and/or sick partners or spouses. They are also responsible for all of the household chores, for transmitting values, for making decisions, and for keeping the family together. The weight of these responsibilities and the frustrations that accompany them not only take a toll on women's physical health but on their mental and emotional health as well. This increases their vulnerability and makes it difficult, if not impossible for them and their families to move out of poverty.

Many households in poor communities are also vulnerable. Their vulnerability stems from the fact that they have few assets or resources which can be used to acquire consumption goods, few people or organisations on which they can call in time of need, and little material or social capital that could increase their capacity to sustain their livelihoods. Such households are also vulnerable to internal shocks including loss of job by the main income earner and the needs of handicapped child, as well as to external shocks like structural changes in the national economy as a result of decline in the agricultural sector, the unavailability of health services, or natural disasters. A significant number of the households interviewed displayed these characteristics and in several household members shares their experiences of the risks that they have to take to survive as well as the impact that the shocks and stresses had had on them and on the household.

Communities can also be vulnerable and analysis of the data suggests that some of the rural as well as urban communities are in fact vulnerable. Of the former factors that contribute to vulnerability of Bouton, Migny and Park Estate include location and distance which results in physical isolation and contributes to social isolation and exclusion, poor infrastructure, few facilities and services. These communities are therefore at risk of remaining undeveloped and poor. Outward migration of young people from these communities is not only depriving them of valuable human resources, but if the trend continues will put them at risk of become extinct. In some other rural communities, erosion of the economic base as a result of the decline in the banana industry created shocks from which many have not recovered. This coupled with lack of facilities and services in some, has increased their vulnerability. The urban communities are also vulnerable, for while they may have more facilities and services, their social environments and the many and varied social problem that exist, and the unacceptable living conditions, especially in terms of inadequate housing and overcrowding, increase their vulnerability and puts their residents at risk.

Many of these communities do not have the capacity to respond to the threats and shocks that characterise life and their residents are often forced to take risks in order to sustain their livelihoods. As a result vulnerability of the community increases vulnerability of its residents, contributes to poverty and deprivation, determines their sense of well being and the quality of their lives and prevents them from enjoying a decent standard of living.

### ***2.5.2.3 Livelihood Strategies***

Poor people employ a wide variety of diverse and complex strategies to sustain their livelihoods and they rely on several sources to acquire what they need in order to survive. However the data show that different individuals and groups of poor people may employ different coping and survival strategies at different times.

While many are of the view that some kind of permanent employment or work as necessary and would like to obtain a job, for most this is not the reality and so they undertake a number of activities from which they might obtain money. Among these are entrepreneurial income generating activities including vending of food and agricultural produce as well as marijuana and other drugs. Many also do a variety of odd jobs, some have back yard gardens and may also raise a few livestock, a small number make and sell craft items to tourists, some seek seasonal employment on construction sites, some females do domestic work and some depend on remittances and public assistance. Others, especially children may beg, steal, or scavenge. While some of these activities are illegal they do provide some level of income that allows individuals and families to survive.

### ***2.5.2.4 Gender***

Data from the PPA clearly show the gender dimensions of poverty and the relationship between gender and poverty. Separate focus group discussions with males and females clearly showed that their experience of poverty was different that poverty affected them differently and that they employ different strategies to sustain their livelihoods. Information collected during the focus group discussions and the household interviews also shows that poverty affects gender roles and relations in the household and in the wider community and that gender relations also contribute to and perpetuate poverty.

Gender socialisation and child rearing practices adopted by parents and adults in poor communities mirror those in the wider society and continue to send different but specific and powerful messages to boys and girls about masculinity and femininity, about the roles that males and females are expected to play in the society, and about how males and females are expected to relate to each other.

In most of the households interviewed the gender division of labour was along traditional gender lines, so that while many of the interviewees said that boys as well as girls did do house work, it was the female children and adults that did the bulk of the domestic chores and were responsible for the housework while the males “helped.” In a few households male children were not expected, taught or allowed to do housework and in a few cases as adult males living with their mothers continued to “do nothing in the house” and made no contribution to the household economies. While many women combined domestic chores with paid employment or other income generating activities, responsibility for child care and care of the sick and elderly prevents some women from seeking full time employment and contributes to poverty in some households.



The gender division of labour was also evident in the wider community in the types of work and income generating activities in which males and females were engaged. For example more of the males tended to be involved construction jobs and in drug trafficking and crime and more of the females in domestic service type activities, vending and involvement in the sex trade. However the data show that young men feel alienated and frustrated because they cannot get jobs, and that older men feel inadequate and “less than a man” because they are unable to provide for their families.

At the same time poor males as well as poor females, when they do get a job were usually were both being paid low wages that were insufficient to pull their households and families out of poverty. This has implications for poor women who are solely responsible for meeting the financial needs of the household and whose economic contributions are essential for survival of family members. At the same time, since most poor males either have no regular source of income or if employed are earning low wages, it also determines the extent to which they can play their expected gender role of breadwinner and provider. In spite of this, many poor women still look for and expect poor men to contribute to the household economy or at least provide them with “child money” and to support their children. In several of the focus group discussions women continually referred to men who were not supporting their children and the burden it placed on them as women, and men kept referring to their inability to provide this support and described how it made them feel.

Male support of a household is therefore one indicator that can be used to determine the severity of poverty being faced by household members and this is especially true of households in which there is no adult male. However the present of an adult male does not necessarily or automatically translate into support of or contribution to the household. The data show that many men were not supporting their families and that these included those who had no source of income as well as those who spent their wages on alcohol rather than contributing them to the household.

In many of the households interviewed the female household head was in a visiting relationship and therefore no adult male was permanently residing in these. The adult male was “invisible”. One of the reasons given for this phenomenon was that several of the men might be in a visiting relationship with women in more than one household. At the same time poor men who are in several visiting relationships may well be unemployed or be working for very low wages and therefore unable to contribute or support any of the households in which they may be visiting. This has serious implications for the women whom these men may be visiting, as it not only leaves them with the sole responsibility for the welfare of their children and may also lead to a breakdown in the relationships.

Gender relations are generally based on beliefs about masculinity and femininity and about society’s expectations. However data from household interviews and focus group discussions produced important insights into sex and sexuality, and highlighted a variety of mating patterns which suggest that sex and sexual favours are the basis of many gender relations. In one community workshop residents were concerned about what they called “*the high level of*

*multiple sexuality on both sides*", including relationships between older women and younger men, between older men and young girls, carnal knowledge, incest and sexual abuse.

Some women, including some in permanent relationships in nuclear families admitted that the relationship with their male partners was mainly about sex, that it was not harmonious and that it was characterised by disagreement, arguments and conflict. Several regretted the lack of communication and discussion of concerns or problems and were of the view that this had contributed to and resulted in deterioration in the way that men and women treated each other.

Some men, including some young men, were of the view that if women wanted money from them then they had to have a sexual relationship. Some women use multiple partners and prostitution as a strategy for obtaining money to support their children, and several admitted to having relationships with and producing children for several men, and there was one woman who had ten children from six different men. However women who engage in prostitution are often ridiculed and called names ("Rats and Bombs) not only by men but by women as well.

While abuse of and violence against women are serious crimes, in some households and communities it is still believed to be a family matter, is hidden and not spoken about. During discussions it was evident that abuse and domestic violence were an integral part of some gender relations and some women pointed out that they stayed in the relationship because of financial dependency on the man, because they lacked alternatives and therefore had no choice.

At the same time some women who are victims of abuse or domestic violence still believe that having a boyfriend/male partner, even if he is abusing them, is the only thing that would improve their situation and make their lives better. This belief may well be the result of gender socialisation through which females may have learnt to believe that the presence of a male partner is essential to their well being.

While many non poor women are also victims of abuse and domestic violence they may in theory have more choices and be more likely to leave the relationship. However research into abuse and domestic violence in several Caribbean countries has shown that dependency, lack of alternatives and a belief that they have no choice are among the reasons why many women stay. In spite of this because of the adverse conditions in which poor women live and of the fact that they tend to have more children than their non poor counterparts, poor women who are victims of abuse and domestic violence are in a more precarious position and therefore remaining in abusive relationships may be another factor that keeps them locked in poverty.

The issue of violence against men was also raised in some discussions and there were a few cases in which men had been victims of domestic violence. Gender relations in which abuse and violence are regular features have serious implications for the stability of families of whatever type, especially when, as is often the case children witness these activities. Then not only does the cycle of poverty continue but the cycle of violence as well. Much more research on the incidence of abuse and violence in relationships be conducted but there is need to expose people in the communities studied to gender training, and to programmes on relationship

building, parenting, anger management, and conflict resolution as was suggested by quite a few residents.

The issue of gender is an important one for understanding the different ways in which males and females as separate and distinct groups perceive and experience poverty, how poverty affects them and determines how they play their gender roles and how they relate to each other, and how its impact on the quality of their lives and their sense of well being. At the same time poverty alleviation programmes must take gender differences into consideration and be designed to meet the specific and particular needs of poor males and poor females.

#### ***2.5.2.5 Poverty Alleviation***

Qualitative data generated and collected during the PPA are important not only for complementing and giving greater meaning to the quantitative data produced by the Survey of Living Conditions, but because it highlights the social reality, concerns and needs of poor individuals, households and communities. Along with the Institutional Assessment it also provides information about initiatives being undertaken by various organisations to alleviate poverty.

However the data show that while there have been some poverty initiatives in the past, residents in some of the communities were of the view that neither they nor their households had benefited. They also indicated that while that institutions and schemes had been set up to provide them with assistance, facilities, services and resources, because of they were could not meet the requirements, they had been unable to access or benefit from any of these.

Future initiatives to alleviate poverty should therefore use these data to develop strategies and to design programmes that are intended to meet the specific needs of particular households, groups and communities. They must also implement the changes required to transform conditions in poor communities and to improve the quality of life and sense of well being of their residents.

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