



Chronic Poverty
Research Centre

Life Histories: Resource Pack

Edited by

Kate Bird

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Acknowledgements

This Resource Pack presents guidance on using life histories for research on chronic poverty in low income developing countries. It is partially based on a Chronic Poverty Research Centre workshop in Senegal in 2006, where life history and biographical methods were discussed. The core materials presented there have been adjusted and used in training and research design workshops by the CPRC and the Overseas Development Institute since then.

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1. Introduction

1.1. The aim of this resource pack

This resource pack aims to introduce researchers to a number of issues in designing, analysing and presenting life history research. It is anticipated that the resource pack will be of particular use to researchers aiming to use life history methods in research on poverty or chronic poverty, but may well be of use to a wider audience

This pack builds on the work presented in two major international methods workshops hosted by the Chronic Poverty Research Centre. The first explored how the Centre might use Q-squared methods, which sequence and combine the use of quantitative and qualitative methods (see workshop report¹). The second focused on life history methods (see rapporteur's report²).

1.2. Structure of the resource pack

This resource pack contextualises material on life histories by introducing the Chronic Poverty Research Centre and the theoretical frameworks underpinning its work (Section 1.2.1, below) before providing a brief introduction to designing chronic poverty research (Section 2) and to collecting life histories (Section 3). This material is complemented by some suggested resources on participatory methods, which can be used alongside the collection of life histories, and research ethics. The pack then introduces the Francophone approach to life history research (Section 4) and outlines some practical exercises to experience life history interviewing (Section 5) before presenting 5 pieces of research undertaken using life history methods (Section 6). After this the resource pack introduces a range of options for the analysis of life histories (Section 7) and the record of a panel discussion on using life history methods (Section 8), before introducing NVivo7 (for the thematic and hermeneutic analysis of qualitative data, including life history narratives) (Section 9).

The resource pack then discusses different approaches to presenting life histories (Section 10) and then concludes (Section 11).

¹ [Workshop report on Panel surveys and life history methods](#), February 2006.

² Rapporteur's report on: (1) [Biographical research](#), (2) [Disseminating results](#), (3) [Panel discussion notes](#), (4) [Practical experience](#), and (5) [Three introductory presentations by Andrew Shepherd](#).



1.3. Presentations

1.3.1. [*CPRC 'Framework Paper' Highlights.*](#) Andrew Shepherd.

This presentation introduces a paper written by Andrew Shepherd, which outlines the theoretical underpinnings of research in the Chronic Poverty Research Centre. The abstract for the paper says 'In order to explain and work out how to interrupt chronic poverty a clear and coherent conceptual framework is necessary. Elements of the framework are elaborated in a set of companion papers. The framework has three levels. The first is a statement of the problem 'chronic poverty' (section 2). The second is an elaboration of how we are looking at this problem through the lenses of poverty dynamics and inter-generational transmission (section 3). The third level proposes concepts which are most useful in understanding and explaining chronic poverty, poverty dynamics and intergenerational transmission (section 4). In particular this suggests that there is an interdisciplinary meeting point between concepts of 'poverty traps' and 'adverse incorporation'. Key components of the context are explored in section 5. One of these – the performance of the state, and in particular the under-performance of 'fragile states' or chronically deprived countries – is the subject of section 6, which suggests both that the conceptual framework has something to say to the 'fragile states' discourse, and that dealing with chronic poverty may be an important task in 'fragile states'. Section 7 concludes with a reflection on how this paper changes the way we see chronic poverty.'

1.3.2. [*The uses of Life Histories for the CPRC.*](#) Toubab Dialao.

This presentation provides an overview of how the Chronic Poverty Research Centre uses life histories and introduces some issues, for example, using life histories as part of Q squared methodologies; the value of life history approaches, how life history approaches can give multi-generational perspectives, difficult philosophical and methodological issues and challenges in communicating research results.

1.4. Resources

Baulch, B., & Scott, L. (eds.) (2006). [Panel Surveys and life history methods: Workshop Report.](#) Manchester, UK: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

The workshop on which this report was based sought to enable CPRC partners and others to share their experience of combining quantitative and qualitative methods for the study of chronic poverty (including both shorter term poverty dynamics and the longer-term intergenerational transmission of poverty). The focus of the workshop was on, but not restricted to, panel surveys and life history methods. It is useful for researchers aiming to use life history methods in their research as it indicates that life history methods can be used effectively alongside panel data analysis.



Shepherd, A. (2006). '[A conceptual framework for understanding and explaining chronic poverty](#)'. CPRC Working Paper 80. Manchester, UK: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

See section 1.3.1, above, for a brief outline of this paper.



2. Designing Chronic Poverty Research

2.1. Briefing note: [Designing research on chronic poverty, using life history methods.](#) *Kate Bird.*

This Briefing Note offers an introduction to some of the key issues in designing chronic poverty research using life history methods. These include using life histories to explore changes in well-being over time; developing research question; how your world view can affect research design; selecting methods; developing a project budget; designing research instruments; collecting data; and building your audience's needs into research design.

2.2. Presentation: [Designing Chronic Poverty Research.](#) *Kate Bird.*

This presentation provides a brief framework for designing chronic poverty research. It poses some key questions for researchers, identifies data sources and potential data gaps specific to researching chronic poverty. These gaps may be filled through life history interviews, which can play an important role in a research toolbox.

2.3. Resources

2.3.1. *Qualitative research*

da Corta, L. (2008). '[The Political Economy of Agrarian Change: Dinosaur or Phoenix?](#)'. QEH Working Paper Series No. 174. Oxford: Oxford Department of International Development.

Becker, H.S. (1996). 'The epistemology of qualitative research'. In *Ethnography and human development: context and meaning in social inquiry* (Eds) Richard Jessor, Anne Colby, and Richard A. Shweder. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 53-71.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

DeWalt, K. M. & DeWalt, B. R. (2002). *Participant observation*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). '[Five Misunderstandings About Case Study Research](#)'. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12 (2), 219-245.

Taylor S.J. and Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*. NJ, US: John Wiley & Sons Inc.



2.3.2. Q2 methods

Q-squared methods:

<http://www.q-squared.ca>) This website presents material which builds on three international conference on Q2 methods.

Ways of combining qualitative and quantitative approaches:

Kanbur, R. (2001). *Q-Squared: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Poverty Appraisal*. Delhi: Permanent Black.

Papers presented in '[Q-Squared in Practice: A Conference on Experiences of Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Poverty Appraisal](#)'. University of Toronto, Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto, May 15-16, 2004.

Using Q-squared methods to influence policy:

The Centre for Analysis and Forecasting, Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences, Hanoi, 2007. See the special issue of the *International Journal of Mixed Research Approaches* 2 (2), 2008.

Also see the **Chronic Poverty Research Centre Toolbox**

<http://www.chronicpoverty.org/page/toolbox>

- [Research design](#)
- [Combining methods](#)
- [Analysing data](#)
- [Q-Squared research](#)



3. Issues in designing research, collecting (and recording) data – using life stories, oral testimonies and family histories

3.1. Briefing Note: Issues in collecting (and recording) data from life histories, life stories, oral testimonies and family histories. *Kate Bird and Annica Ojermark.*

This Briefing note provides guidance as to when the life history approach is useful, as well as how to decide the best parameters for a study that uses the life history method. It considers which approaches to collecting, recording and analysing life histories deliver results most likely to contribute to policy debates, and which are most likely to be valued by academic audiences. It poses questions as to how the researcher may avoid bias, and if all researchers face the same challenges in using the approach.

3.2. Presentation: Reflections on using life history approaches. *Kate Bird.*

This presentation looks at how experienced qualitative researchers can quickly and successfully add life history methods to their 'toolbox'. It highlights some of the problems in research design and challenges in the analysis. Issues of building trust, eliciting the 'truth' and selectivity are addressed.

3.3. Resources

3.3.1. *Life history approaches*

Roberts, B. (2002). *Biographical Research*. Buckingham/Philadelphia: Open University Press.

This text is strongly recommended as an introduction to the use of life history methods.

3.3.2. *Participative methods*

Participation Resource Centre, Resource Archive: <http://www.pnet.ids.ac.uk/prc>

Eldis Participation Resource Guide: <http://www.eldis.org/participation/index.htm>

Thesis, J. and Grady, H.M. (1991). *Participatory Rapid Appraisal for Community Development*. London: IIED and SCF Federation.



3.3.3. *Research ethics*

CPRC Toolbox on research ethics:

http://www.chronicpoverty.org/uploads/publication_files/toolbox-1.pdf

Laws, S., Harper, C., and Marcus, R. (2003). *Research for Development: a practical guide*. London: Sage and Save the Children. (See Chapter 13 'Research Ethics'). Available at:

Social Research Association (2003) '[Ethical Guidelines](#)'. London: SRA.

Chambers, R. (1993). *Challenging the Professionals: Frontiers for Rural Development*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications.

Chambers, R. (1983). *Rural Development: Putting the Last First*. London: Longman.

Brown, N., Boulton, M., Lewis, G., Webster, A. (2004) . 'Social science research ethics in developing countries and contexts'. ESRC Research Ethics Framework Discussion Paper. Swindon, UK: ESRC. Available at: http://www.york.ac.uk/res/ref/docs/REFpaper3_v2.pdf

Economic and Social Research Council (--). *ESRC Research Ethics Framework*'. Swindon, UK: ESRC. Available at: http://www.gold.ac.uk/media/ESRC_Re_Ethics_Frame_tcm6-11291.pdf

Summer, A. (2007). 'What are the Ethics of Development Studies?'. IDS Bulletin Volume 38 Number 2 March 2007. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies. Available at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2007.tb00352.x/abstract>



4. Practical Interviewing Experience

4.1. Briefing note: [Life history interviewing: practical exercise](#). *Kate Bird*.

This note provides instructions for an exercise designed to familiarise participants with what it feels like to interview and be interviewed. It also outlines some of the challenges of conducting life history interviews, as well suggesting some of the optimal skills/ personal attributes of a good life history interviewer. It asks how important methodological skills of trust building and research are, as well as others such as local knowledge and language abilities. A sample life history check list is provided.

4.2. Resources

Atkinson, R. (1998) *The Life Story Interview*, London, Sage.

This book discusses the context and uses of life stories and their research uses, how to generate data from them, and the art and science of the life story interview. First, Atkinson places the life history interview into a wider research context (it's history, broad usages etc.). Then he provides specific suggestions and guidelines for preparing and executing the interview. The book also includes useful recommendations on how to collect the information desired, and transcribing and interpreting the interview. (See link for extracts.) ([The Life History Interview](#))



5. Research findings: examples of research which present the analysis of life histories.

This section presents five case studies: Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Uganda, South Africa and West Africa. Presentations are accompanied by relevant resources.

5.1. Presentation: Governance failure and macroeconomic meltdown: findings from life history research in Zimbabwe. *Kate Bird.*

This presentation looks at two studies in Zimbabwe (1) DFID funded 'Community Dynamics & Coping Strategies' (2) CPRC funded 'Improving market access for the chronically poor in failed & fragile states'. An overview of macro-economic situation is provided, as well as a timeline of key events. The limitations of the studies, such as time constraints, the impact of operation Sunrise, as well as power cuts and fuel shortages are given. The findings and recommendations made to DFID for each of the projects is discussed.

5.1.1. *Resources*

Bird, K. and Prowse, M. (2009). 'Vulnerability, poverty and coping in Zimbabwe.' CPRC Working Paper No 136. Manchester, UK: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

This paper uses five life histories from three locations in Zimbabwe – one peri-urban, one urban, and one rural – to provide a window on current processes of impoverishment and adverse coping. Each case and location highlights key aspects of Zimbabwe's recent economic and political turmoil. Together the cases suggest that, similar to Hoddinott's work on the persistence of the 1993/94 rainfall shock in rural Zimbabwe, above and beyond increased mortality rates and morbidity levels, current adverse forms of coping are creating widespread irreversible well-being losses. The persistent effects of the current crisis surely adds weight to arguments that the international community should be more, rather than less, proactive in delivering aid to Zimbabwean people, despite the politicisation of aid and logistical difficulties. [author's own]



5.2.Presentation: Exploring poverty dynamics from life history interviews in Bangladesh. *Peter Davis*

20 individuals from 6 villages and 3 towns in Kushtia district in Bangladesh were selected for life history interviews. Case-based research is compared to variable based research, such as panel surveys. Different trajectories are outlined, before looking at causality and structured disadvantage. Conclusions are drawn as to the nature of the interview and of the analysis, as well as people's interpretations of causation and the scope for qualitative / quantitative combinations.

5.2.1. *Resources*

Handouts: (1) [Causality](#); (2) [Structured Disadvantage](#) and (3) [Types of Theory in Social Research](#)

Davis, P. (2006) '[Poverty in time: Exploring poverty dynamics from life history interviews in Bangladesh](#)'. Paper presented at Workshop on Concepts and Methods for Analysing Poverty Dynamics and Chronic Poverty, 23 to 25 October 2006, University of Manchester.

This paper draws from life-history interviews to investigate poverty dynamics in Bangladesh and considers life-histories as a supplement to more quantitative approaches in poverty research. Qualitative life-history methods allow the examination of the temporal and spatial context of people's lives in a way that uncovers a number of social phenomena concealed to other methods. These are discussed using life-histories to demonstrate the types of social phenomena that can be uncovered. A number of categories of life trajectory are also identified and the use of a categorical approach as a way of using longitudinal qualitative findings to inform social policy is discussed. The lessons learned have relevance for using life histories to examine poverty dynamics more generally and also draw attention to the potential for using life history approaches in medium-n studies which may help to cross the qualitative / quantitative divide in poverty research. [Author's own summary]

5.3. Life History Research in Uganda (David Lawson)

5.3.1. *Presentations*

Q2 Analysis to Understand Poverty Dynamics in Uganda. *David Lawson.*

The presentation reviews previous Q2 work. It begins with some background information on Uganda, before looking at Uganda PPA 1 and 2. Economic analysis from various approaches are outlined. It is demonstrated that such qualitative and quantitative approaches can be used in combination to add value to understanding the drivers, maintainers and interrupters of poverty, but they are not genuine Q2. The author contends that very limited genuine Q2 work has previously been undertaken. Some examples are listed.



5.3.2. Resources

Lawson, D. with Hulme, D. and Muwonge, J. (2006). ['Applying 'Q2' Methods to Understand the Impact of Ill Health and HIV/AIDS on Poverty Dynamics'](#) Extended Abstract.

This research in this book combines the strengths of quantitative analysis (representativeness, confidence levels, understanding of correlates and characteristics) and life history analysis (the elaboration of processes that underpin correlations, the understandings that poor people have of their poverty and the critical events that have caused deprivation), to make a genuine attempt at providing thorough insights in to poverty dynamics. Given the relative infancy of applying 'Q2' to poverty research, in this way, the paper adopts a joint methodological/themed approach i.e. it explains through the use of examples how the methods were combined to further our knowledge of poverty dynamics before then providing explicit examples of key findings. (Author's own)

Lawson, D. and Hulme, D. (2006). ['Sample Life History Questionnaire'](#). CPRC Toolbox.

A sample semi-structured life history questionnaire using the example of Uganda 1992 -1999 Q2 research.

5.4. Presentation: [Life Histories in the VLMSP Project, South Africa.](#) *David Neves.*

This presentation provides a background to the Vulnerability, Labour Markets and Social Protection (VLMSP) Project in South Africa. The research design is explained and the challenges faced discussed. The presentation ends with an examination of the analysis used.

5.4.1. Resources

du Toit, A., and Neves, D. (2006). [Vulnerability and Social Protection at the Margins of the Formal Economy. Case studies from Khayelitsha and the Eastern Cape.](#) Cape Town: PLAAS, University of the Western Cape.

5.5. Life history research in West Africa

- Presentation: [Economic Context and Family Formation in Urban Africa: The Cases of Dakar and Lome.](#) *Phillippe Antoine and Donatien Beguy.*



Reading

- Antoine, P. (no date) 'Event-history analysis of nuptiality: an application to Africa.' Paris, France: Institut de Recherche sur le Développement (IRD).
- Antoine, P. (2005). 'Analyse Biographique de la Transformation de Modèles Matrimoniaux dans quatre capitaux Africaines: Antananarivo, Dakar, Lomé et Yaoundé.' Études Longitudinales et Défis Démographiques du XXIe Siècle. 18-19 novembre 2005, Université de Montréal. *Institut de recherche pour le développement, Dakar* Équipe Jeremi, UR Dial/Cipré. Available at: <http://www.erudit.org/revue/cqd/2006/v35/n2/018591ar.pdf>
- Antoine, P. (2002). 'L'approche biographique de la nuptialité ; application à l'Afrique.' Document de travail DIAL / Unité de Recherche CIPRE. Available at: http://www.dial.prd.fr/dial_publications/PDF/Doc_travail/2002-05.pdf
- Antoine, P., Razafindrakoto, M. and Roubaud, F. (2001). 'Contraints de rester jeune ? Evolution de l'insertion dans trois capitales africaines : Dakar, Yaoundé, Antananarivo.' Document de Travail DT/2001/08 DIAL / Unité de Recherche CIPRE. Available at: <http://basepub.dauphine.fr/bitstream/handle/123456789/4744/2001-08.pdf?sequence=1>



6. Options in analysing life histories

6.1. Briefing Note: [Options in Analysing Life Histories](#). *Kate Bird*.

This briefing note discusses the range of ways in which data from life history interviews can be analysed. It introduces each of them, briefly, in turn and discusses the factors that may influence your choice of approach. It examines the different preferences that audiences may have, regarding some forms of data and analysis more accessible or robust and reliable than others and discusses briefly how this may influence your choice of method. It provides an overview of how the selection of analytical methods and approaches is influenced by: the goal of your research; the central research question of your research; epistemology and world view, and; your principle audience. The author demonstrates that the way that you plan to eventually disseminate or communicate your research findings interacts with your choice of analytical method, as well as knowing how your target audience views knowledge and evidence may influence your approach to data analysis. The paper provides suggested computer packages to use.

6.2. Presentation: [Options in Analysing Life Histories](#). *Kate Bird*.

This presentation follows the outline of the briefing note (above) of the same name. It begins with factors that may influence the researchers' choice of approach, and moves on to options in analysis.

6.3. Resources

Miller, R. L. (2000). *Researching Life Stories and Family Histories*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Miller demonstrates that biographical research is a distinctive way of conceptualising social activity. The three main approaches to this type of research are covered in the book:

1. *Realist (inductive)*: This approach uses grounded-theory techniques of interviewing. Researchers begin with a hypothesis and through a series of interviews produce the facts that will be incorporated into theory. Interviews go in series or rounds, starting with unfocused interviews and returning with more specific questions once generalizations from the first are drawn up. Interviews stop at the point of saturation, when no new ideas are being generated and the theory has been proven. Analysis takes the form of categorizing the information gathered into 'building blocks' from which theory is constructed. This information is then validated against further empirical material-transcripts or new interviews.



2. *Neo-positivist*: This approach validates pre-existing theory against empirical reality. Previous work or a literature review on the topic of interest generates the form of the interview and the questions that will guide it. The aim is to fill gaps in the research, or to provide a more holistic or nuanced perspective to phenomena. The identified gaps form the basis of the analysis, as they determine the topics to be investigated and the subject of the interviews.
3. *Narrative*: The emphasis in this approach is on the active construction of life stories through the interplay between interviewer and interviewee. The finished text is the result of the collaborative project, and the informant's viewpoint treated as a unique perspective, mediated by social context. Analysis is of the interview itself, or the informant's view of reality, the themes that emerge from the narrative, how they reconstruct the past and meaning. Involves the microanalysis of the text, to get at the perceptive and contextual nature of 'reality'.

This can be expanded as illustrated in Briefing Note 1 to include positivism, post-modernist, critical theory approaches and grounded theory approaches. See Chapter 2, above.

6.4. Introducing Nvivo: [Training Resources for NVivo7](#) by Didier Dupont

This exercise is an Nvivo7 tutorial designed to guide you through an introduction to the software. It takes an hour to complete.

6.5. Nvivo Resources

- [Installation Instructions for NVivo](#)
- Learning NVivo:
 - [Teach yourself NVivo: the Introductory Tutorials](#)
 - [Resources for Learning NVivo](#)
- Post Workshop Handbook for NVivo: [Up and Running](#)
- References for Guidance:
 - [Graham Gibbs \(Bryman, Alan, ed.\) \(2002\) Qualitative Data Analysis: Explorations with NVivo, Open University Press.](#)
- Online Forum for NVivo Users: [QSR International](#)
- Resources to support exercises with NVivo
 - [Maymana and Mafizul's story](#)
 - [PANOS-Mountain Voices](#)
 - [Links to Additional Resources](#)



7. Presenting Life Histories (Kate Bird)

7.1. Briefing note: [Issues in disseminating findings from life histories.](#)

Annica Ojermark and Kate Bird

This Briefing Note outlines some of the issues that need to be considered when deciding how best to disseminate findings from life history research. It outlines the needs and preferences of different audiences and suggests ways of meeting these different needs.

7.2. Resources

7.2.1. *Life histories*

Bertaux, D., and Kohli, M. (1984) 'The Life Story Approach: A Continental View.' *Annual Review of Sociology*, 10: 215-237.

This journal article examines recent developments in the use of life histories in Europe. It identifies two main trends (i) how to collect and analyse life histories whilst focusing on the symbolic and meaning in individual lives. (ii) how to get accurate descriptions from interviewees about their life trajectories and uncover patterns of social relationships and what may have shaped them. It concludes that a standard methodology for conducting life histories is not likely to emerge in the near future, but ways of collecting and analysing life stories could.

Ojermark, A. (2006). '[Presenting Life Histories: a literature review and annotated bibliography](#)'. Manchester, UK: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

This annotated bibliography reviews a range of approaches used to analyse and present the results of life histories/oral testimonies and explores how these narratives are presented to a variety of audiences. It aims to identify the strategies and tools available to researchers wishing to influence policy through and for the people whose life histories are collected and communicated.



7.2.2. *Dissemination, communication and policy engagement*

Bird, K. (2007). 'Identifying and Communicating Pro-Poor Policy Messages to Policy Audiences: the Case of Chronic Poverty in Uganda'. Q-Squared Working Paper No. 43. Toronto: Centre for International Studies, University Of Toronto. Available at: <http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/345.pdf>

Bird, K., and Grant, U. (eds.) (2005). [Policy Influencing and Media Engagement Resource Pack](#). Manchester, UK: CPRC.

This resource pack aims to help researchers and civil society organisations overcome the challenges they face when attempting to use research-based evidence to influence pro-poor policy change. The pack then proceeds to highlight the role of policy entrepreneurs in getting issues onto policy agendas. It presents material which highlights the importance of understanding the political and policy context when designing research and constructing research dissemination strategies. Case studies from the Chronic Poverty Research Centre are presented that address the opportunities and challenges in international and national level advocacy. Papers produced by Panos examine the issues faced by researchers when they attempt to use the media to disseminate research results and build domestic and international constituencies for pro-poor action, and provide participants with systematic advice on interacting with the media.

Hovland, I. (2003) '[Communication of Research for Poverty Reduction: A Literature Review](#).' London: ODI.

This literature review focuses on the communication of research for poverty reduction and draws on an annotated bibliography of over 100 documents from DFID and other development agencies, research institutes, academics and practitioners.

Hovland, I. (2005) '[Successful Communication Tools](#).' London: ODI.

The aim of this toolkit is to help researchers and practitioners to use research successfully to communicate with a variety of audiences. The tools have been grouped under four broad headings that seem to sum up the core concerns: 'Planning', 'Packaging', 'Targeting', and 'Monitoring'. Although by no means exhaustive or complete, this preliminary set of tools should enable both researchers and practitioners to start engaging with the relevant steps of a communication process, and to find links to further information, guidelines and resources at each step.

Start, D. and Hovland, I. (2004) '[Tools for Policy Impact: A Handbook for Researchers](#).' London: ODI.

The handbook attempts to identify tools to help researchers to use their research findings to contribute to pro-poor policy processes



7.2.3. *Selected CPRC working papers, drawing on life history research.*

Hulme, D. (2003). ['Thinking 'Small' and the Understanding of Poverty: Maymana and Mofizul's Story'](#). CPRC Working Paper 22. Manchester, UK: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

This CPRC Working Paper examines different approaches to poverty and its reduction. It argues that researchers should counter balance contemporary 'big' thinking on poverty with 'thinking small', thereby challenging the orthodoxy. This is illustrated through the life history of a poor two person household in Bangladesh. In conclusion it points to their personal agency.

Bird, K., and Shinyekwas, I. (2005). ['Even the 'rich' are vulnerable: multiple shocks and downward mobility in rural Uganda'](#). *Development Policy Review*, 23 (1): 55-85

This journal article uses a household survey, village-level participatory studies and in-depth life-history interviews to examine people's poverty trajectories and to identify the drivers and maintainers of chronic poverty. Shocks and barriers which propel people into, or keep people in chronic poverty are explored. The analysis highlights the importance of poverty interrupters, such as the end of conflict and the re-integration of internally displaced people, and suggests that state-led interventions are needed to provide real opportunities to the chronically poor.

Bird, K. and Pratt, N. (2004). ['Fracture Points in Social Policies for Chronic Poverty Reduction & Annex: Illustrative Case Studies of the Fracture Points in Social Policy Formation for Poverty Reduction \(Kate Bird and Tammie O'Neil, with Vincent J. Bolt\).'](#)

This paper examines the fracture points in social policy formation, from agenda setting through to policy formation and its legitimisation. The authors query the reasons as to why policy makers may still fail to generate adequate responses, despite having clearly identified severe and widespread problems. To illustrate this, the authors use a number of issues that have been seen to represent a wide range of different groups.

They argue that the political processes surrounding policy agenda setting appear be strongly influenced by dominant poverty and development discourses. Hence, national discourses are influenced by donors, and tend to focus on economic stabilisation and growth.

The paper concludes that for relevant policies to be formed, legitimised and effectively implemented policy discourses need to be shifted so that the needs of vulnerable groups are identified as valid. This may be through a process that identifies needs and then designs policy focusing on these rather than on particular groups of people.



Bird, K. and Bolt, V. (2003). ['The Intrahousehold Disadvantages Framework: A Framework for the Analysis of Intra-household Difference and Inequality'](#) *CPRC Working Paper, No.32*. CPRC Working Paper No 32. Manchester, UK: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

This paper introduces the Intrahousehold Disadvantages Framework (IDF), which provides researchers with a set of practical tools to analyse intra-household differentiation. It argues that development research has tended to focus on gender when studying social differentiation within the household. The aim of the paper is to present the IDF as a starting point for a holistic analysis of intra-household social differentiation.

The IDF is a two-tier framework that examines the impact of 'clusters of disadvantage' on intra-household resource allocation and decision-making. These 'clusters' are locally identified, and reflect real individuals within the community who are most likely to be amongst the poorest of the poor.

The paper concludes that this framework should not replace specialist investigations of gender, impairment or age, as such work will often be necessary to deepen understanding prior to policy or programme design.

Bird, K., and Prowse, M. (2009). [Vulnerability, poverty and coping in Zimbabwe](#). CPRC Working Paper No. 136. Manchester, UK: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

This paper presents findings from life history-based research in three contrasting study sites in Zimbabwe and explores the impact of governance-related shocks on both rural and urban communities.

Lawson, David (2007). ['Methodological Issues Associated with Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches to Understanding Poverty Dynamics: Evidence from Uganda'](#) An ERSC Research Group and GPRG Working Paper.

Lawson, David (2006). ['Quantitative and Qualitative Approach to Understanding Poverty and Inequality Dynamics in Uganda: Collection of Life History Data based on 1992/99 Household Panel'](#)

du Toit, A., and Neves, D. (2006). [Vulnerability and Social Protection at the Margins of the Formal Economy. Case studies from Khayelitsha and the Eastern Cape](#). Cape Town: PLAAS, University of the Western Cape.

This report summarises the results of an in-depth investigation into the social dynamics of vulnerability and social protection commissioned for National Treasury via SIPP: a research programme aimed at Strengthening the Impact of Pro-Poor Programmes in the Budget, run by the National Treasury, South Africa. The project



was also an attempt to explore and test the potential of in-depth qualitative methods in the exploration of poverty dynamics. The material elicited through fieldwork proved to be very rich. The current report touches on some of the most important and policy relevant patterns highlighted by field material.

Davis, P. (2006). 'Poverty in time: Exploring poverty dynamics from life history interviews in Bangladesh'. Working Paper 69. Manchester, UK: IDPM/Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

This paper draws from life history interviews to investigate poverty dynamics in Bangladesh and considers life histories as a supplement to more quantitative approaches in poverty research. Qualitative life history methods allow the examination of the temporal and spatial context of people's lives in a way that uncovers a number of social phenomena concealed to other methods. These are discussed using life histories to demonstrate the types of social phenomena that can be uncovered. A number of categories of life trajectory are also identified and the use of a categorical approach as a way of using longitudinal qualitative findings to inform social policy is discussed. The lessons learned have relevance for using life histories to examine poverty dynamics more generally and also draw attention to the potential for using life history approaches in medium-n studies which may help to cross the qual/quant divide in poverty research.

da Corta, L., and Magongo, J. (2011). 'Evolution of gender and poverty dynamics in Tanzania'. CPRC Working Paper 203. Manchester, UK: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

In Tanzania, liberalisation and de-agrarianisation have led to unequal growth; stagnating and in some cases increasing poverty; fragmented landholdings; and a rise in the cost of essentials. Local user costs also continue to cripple local populations, despite the government's commitment to eradicating these. Meanwhile, traditional gendered roles in rural households have changed, with longer-term de-masculinisation and corresponding feminisation of responsibility for family provisioning – both within marriage (contingent on a rise in male underemployment, despair and alcoholism) and through a rise in divorce, widowhood and single motherhood.

Women have been empowered particularly by their membership in female credit networks. In response, some men assault this freedom by marrying second wives, spending more money and time outside the home, labelling women prostitutes and perpetrating physical abuse. These issues have contributed to the rise in the number of female-headed households. Widowed and divorced women are exposed to customary stripping of assets by husbands or husband's kin. Women's statutory rights under land and marriage legislation are not enforced. Traditional support has also fallen, leaving women deprived of the means to support children's nutritional and educational needs in a time of rising costs, which may perpetuate intergenerational poverty in the coming decade.



The paper suggests further linking small female credit networks to cooperatives so they can access more capital; reworking and enforcing legislation; acknowledging women's role as key providers; and establishing gender-sensitive employment guarantee schemes, in part to help poor rural men emerge from poverty traps so they can contribute to the family provisioning.

Higgins, K. (2011). [Escaping poverty in Tanzania: what can we learn from cases of success?](#) CPRC Working Paper 204. Manchester, UK: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

This paper draws on longitudinal Q-Squared data from six research sites across mainland Tanzania to examine how and why people experienced upward socio-economic mobility, and in some cases poverty escape, in a context where this has been limited. It uses a locally relevant but comparable well-being classification system and finds that poverty is entrenched across all research sites. The overwhelming majority of households ranked in this study – derived from a representative sample in each site from the 2007 HBS – were identified by representatives in their community as being poor. Further, in line with other analyses, we find that there has been little socioeconomic mobility across these sites over the past decade, and stubborn levels of poverty despite sustained economic growth nationally.

Systematic analysis of the qualitative data set finds that agriculture is a key factor in supporting upward mobility. But critically, it is non-farm businesses, the accumulation of physical assets (such as land and housing), salaried employment and favourable marriage – with agriculture playing a supporting role - which are most effective at moving people out of poverty. When it comes to moving beyond vulnerability, these findings hold. Those that manage to move beyond vulnerability often have multiple sources of income and own a number of valuable physical assets.

The paper makes broad policy conclusions: agricultural development should remain a priority; rural industrialisation requires greater attention; asset accumulation needs to be promoted (and those assets need to be protected); access to credit, and business development, needs to be supported; and that secondary and vocational training opportunities need to be made accessible to young people from poorer households.

Bird, K., Higgins, K and McKay, A. (2011). ['Education and resilience in conflict and insecurity affected Northern Uganda](#) Chronic Poverty Research Centre'. CPRC Working Paper 215. Manchester, UK: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

This paper presents the results from Q-squared analysis (including analysis of the Northern Uganda Baseline Survey, Participatory Learning and Action exercises and life history research) conducted in 5 study sites in Northern Uganda in 2008. It examines the impact of conflict and insecurity on the provision of education services and on children's ability to make use of those services. It also explores the degree to which education supports resilience during periods of prolonged conflict and



insecurity, protecting individuals and their households from downward movement into poverty and supporting their recovery once stability returns.

Miller, R., Mathenge, M., Bird, K., Karin, F.Z., Gitau, R. And Nteza, E.K. (2011). 'Ascending out of poverty: An analysis of family histories in Kenya'. CPRC Working Paper No 219. Manchester, UK: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

This paper looks at inheritance through interviews with several generations of Kenyan families. It seeks to explain the *how* and *why* of poverty through exploring the wider family context and identifies five main routes for ascending out of poverty: (1) the gradual accumulation of resources due to income deriving from cash crops; (2) the gradual accumulation of resources due to income from non-farm work, including remittances from family member who have moved away for work; (3) the role of education, particularly skills training opposed to academic qualification, in helping provide employment; (4) accessing financial assets through support both from extended family members and from informal support mechanisms; (5) stability and benefits accruing from long-term strategic planning, including entrepreneurial activity. Both the ascent out of and the descent into poverty can be better conceived as processes, rather than due to chains of discrete events or specific 'shocks'.

Miller, R., Karin, F.Z., Bird, K., Nteza, E.K., Gitau, R., and Mathenge, M. (2011). 'Family histories and rural inheritance in Kenya'. CPRC Centre Working Paper No 220. Manchester, UK: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

Inheritance systems and practices play an important role in people's ability to exit poverty, or, conversely, plunging them further into it. As land is the major asset in low-income developing countries, how property is passed on and divided between future generations is of great importance. This paper explores inheritance through interviews with several generations of Kenyan families, seeking to explain that the *how* and *why* of poverty can be understood in the wider family context. It analyses their fortunes and misfortunes over a given time period in the context of property ownership rights. It also looks at the impact of education and the inheritance of cultural capital. When both fertility and survival are high, traditional patterns of land inheritance can lead to progression sub-division of land with long-term adverse implications for sustainability. While inheritance in Kenya is male dominated, the paper nonetheless examines the position of women in the chain as vectors of male property rights. The application of male-oriented customary law where inheritance is concerned, rather than the use of statutory legislation, was found to be the reality for the overwhelming majority of the participants in the study.

Cissé, R.(2011, forthcoming) Les Facteurs d'interruption de la transmission et les expériences de sortie de la pauvreté. CPRC Working Paper, forthcoming.



8. Conclusion

8.1. Presentation: Q2: integrated qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Andrew Shepherd.

This presentation reflects on the question 'Why Q2?'. It outlines the need for Q2, whilst highlighting its limitations (such as the time and resources needed, and that generalisation is not possible). The benefits of Q2 are explored, including a richer understanding; better explanations; and the inclusion of social relations and context. Different approaches are considered, ranging from the ideal situation of combining panel data and life histories to alternatives such as participatory studies.