

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THEME 4 :
**Development and poverty reduction : What development vision is
beneath this strategy?**

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I/ Problem

The improvement of human well-being, which is supposed to be the objective of development, is being replaced by Poverty Reduction Strategies which call for a lot of financial and human resources. The results of 10 years of research and fight against poverty is highly a mixed one : the situation worsens and the MDGs are not achieved. Undeniably, Poverty Reduction Policies produced poor results in terms of the peripheral system food production increase, decline in hunger and access of the vulnerable groups to basic social services.

II/ Epistemological and Methodological Controversies

The real difficulty in poverty assessment lies first of all within the actual definition of the phenomenon. To that problem may be added the diversity of its apprehension and assessment which are based on several theoretical approaches and methods, data collection and analysis to solve the issue. What are the different approaches and their field of validity in West Africa?

The economic mind has always distinguished between two issues : wealth creation and distribution. It has hardly formalised their Kaldor and Kuznets interactions with all the current generations of Watson, Thorbecke, Decaluwé and Bourguignon model. They concern mainly the various generations of instruments and model : Gini Index, Sen-Shorrocks-Thon Index, Foster-Greer-Thorbecke Approach (FGT), the general calculable balance (multisimulated and multihousehold), the Robillard-Bourguignon model. What is the significance and shortfalls of these models compared to the knowledge of the profile of poor people, to the link between distribution, poverty and growth as well as the assessment of the impacts of external shocks on poverty and income distribution.

At this level, the desire to identify poor people and assess poverty conceals the fact that poverty is a very complex phenomenon to be brought to a single dimension, especially economic and monetary, of human existence. How to incorporate the multidimensional and complex nature of this phenomenon?

In spite of the volume of investments and research, the number of poor people keeps increasing at the same rate as the population without providing answers to the following fundamental questions :

- How to assess poverty ?
- What are the most vulnerable groups ?
- What are the living conditions of poor and very poor people ?
- Why give more importance to the analysis of inequalities over wealth creation ?
- Which effective policy is to be implemented ?

Land issues, especially well-organised land tenure system can also play a decisive role in economic growth, the fight against poverty and the establishment of good governance. How is the land tenure system in West Africa ? What is to be

expected from it ? Which appropriate policy framework is needed for a land tenure reform involving the State, civil society and farmer organisations ?

III/ Relevance and performance of new strategies for fighting against poverty .

After the SAP failed, substitute policies such as the PRSP are still recent and have three interesting points : taking into account poverty indications in allocation of resources ; the creation of a social control mechanism and its acknowledgement by the law on national dialogue are, undoubtedly, the great success of the process and the creation of adequate and soft safety net from the identification of potential fields of vulnerability and social safety net or to other appropriate responses.

These PRSPs raise a number of issues relating to their relevance and performance whose assessments have not been made entirely.

It is expected to provide answers to the issues raised above and to carry out a strict, exhaustive and critical assessment of Poverty Reduction Programmes which are implemented in almost all ECOWAS countries. Do they represent a development vision ? Will they eradicate poverty ?