



POVERTY ASSESSMENT: BANGKOK

By: Cailah Cox

Progress out of Poverty Index?

Cashpor is a microfinance institution designed to help lift people out of poverty by providing an alternative lending agency besides the for-profit MFI's. A small loan provides poor families an opportunity, they otherwise wouldn't have had, to start a business or use it to boost a business they already have. In order to assess the level's of poverty in certain areas, Cashpor has developed the PPI. It is a simple 10 question survey created from India's common indicators of poverty. The survey is highly accurate with 90% confidence. Understanding the level of poverty is crucial to understanding the needs of a community.

The Neighborhood Interviewed

The neighborhood that was assessed is located in the old part of Bangkok where the city was originally founded. The area hasn't received much attention from the city because it isn't a place most of the locals go unless it is to visit a Buddhist temple. This has created an environment for homeless to congregate as they are able to find odd jobs more easily here. It is close to a larger tourist area so there are quite a few small motels and bars dispersed between the homes of the locals. I interviewed three families that have homes within two blocks of each other.

What does this information say?

In Figure 1 below, the scores that the families received were 42, 45, and 49. The family that received the score of 42 means that 10% of the households with this score live below the poverty line. The other two families fell in the same category of 4.5% of the households with this score live below the poverty line. This data shows that there is a high possibility that these families live above the national poverty line according to the survey. This survey was designed strictly for determining the level of poverty in India. Poverty in Bangkok looks vastly different than it does in India. This PPI is a great base to generalize the level of poverty, but it fails to accurately represent the poverty line seen here. To achieve greater accuracy, there should be a revised survey created that addresses the points of poverty seen in Bangkok.

Figure 1

	Pee Pa	neighbor	Ning
Children	1	3	1
Occupation	food cart seller	taxi driver	food cart seller
Pucca house	yes	yes	yes
Cooking energy	charcoal	propane	charcoal
Television	no	yes	no
Bike	bicycle	motorbike	car
Dressing table	no	no	yes
Sewing machine	no	no	no
Pressure cooker	no	no	no
Electric fans	1	2	3
Score:	42	45	49

The neighborhood in which this survey was taken does have, as expressed before, a quite large homeless population. The neighborhood could actually be quite more poor than this assessment says it is. It seems that this survey doesn't take into account the possibility of a homeless family because all of the questions are about occupation or household items; of which homeless do not have. According to Greer, even beggars improved their lives through entrepreneurship using small loans (2009). A more holistic survey would include analyzing the level of poverty of families that have homes as well as those that do not. This might have to come in the form of two different surveys.

Thai culture is highly family oriented so many of the homes are multi-generational. Having elderly living in the house would also impact the level of poverty of the family because they require more care, have more medical expenses, and are usually unable to work. The number of elderly in a house should be included in the poverty index survey for Bangkok.

In order to accurately assess the level of poverty in a community, the objects in a household that separate the poor from middle-class must be determined. Convenience, for example, is a high priority in Thai culture. So a household may be below the poverty line, but they still own a motorcycle because it is the cheapest & quickest form of transportation. So this would not be an indicator of poverty in this country. Whereas, middle-class families usually have maids and the poor are the maids. This could be an indicator of poverty. Once the level of poverty in a community is adequately assessed, organizations can have a better understanding of the true needs of the people.

References

Greer, P. and. Phil. Smith. (2009). *The Poor Will Be Glad*. Grand Rapids, Zondervan. chapter 8

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