

Seen Through a Study of Key Documents and Interviews with the Poor



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Summary

In poverty assessments the poor are often documented through aggregated figures that compare them with the general population – the poor are those who live on less than roughly two dollars a day; the extremely poor live on half as much. The emphasis in such reports is primarily on what the poor lack, and the focus is on employment and education, health, living conditions and social transfers. Such reports do not tell us much about the social identity of the poor, the situations they live in, or what resources they are able to mobilize; differentiation of social groups is usually rudimentary. Because poverty is context-bound, it is necessary to examine it from the perspective of particular social groups that are based on key criteria: gender, age groups, ethnic groups, and rural/ urban location. In the context of poverty alleviation it is equally important to gain information about the perspectives of the poor on poverty, the resources they command, and the strategies they use to survive. Experiences of poverty and coping strategies vary according to people's social situation, and knowledge of these can contribute to improved design of support strategies and development interventions.

This study of poverty in Macedonia has been undertaken with two aims. The first is to summarize the currently available information on the poor population of the country in a manner that practitioners will find useful in their discussions of forms of development cooperation in the social sphere, and the second is to examine and question the nature of, and adequacy of such information. Our intention is to initiate an exchange of ideas concerning how poverty is conceptualized and documented in the key documents examined in the studies, to point out deficiencies in data, and to suggest alternative, complementary ways of obtaining the information needed to identify potential support needs. To this end, the second part of the study consists of material obtained through one week of intensive in-depth interviews with poor people in Macedonia, where their access to resources and their deployment of them, as well as their limitations and expectations are described and analyzed.¹

We focus first, then, on a specific set of documents that are considered key instruments for understanding poverty and programming development assistance in FYR Macedonia, and discuss variations in the content of the empirical material on poverty presented, noting the gaps

¹ Please see Annex C, Terms of Reference, for the complete description of the study.

in content and deficiencies in analytical approach. The spotlight is on the specific variables of interest in the identification of assistance to the poorer segments of the population as noted above: gender, age, ethnicity, location and social class. After a discussion of these documents, we present the interviews with poor informants, and point to a number of limitations in the existing documentation, suggesting a number of improvements in the analysis and understanding of poverty in relation to key social categories.

The documents analysed show considerable variations, both in terms of the empirical information presented and their approach to poverty and the five key variables. The most up-to date general information about poverty in FYR Macedonia comes from the UNDP's Human Development Report (2004). In terms of employment, it suggests that there is 'jobless growth'. About three out of ten people live below the poverty line, set at 70 percent of the median wage. There is a large informal sector, and considerable economic disparities between different municipalities and regions within the country. The number of welfare beneficiaries has increased continuously between 1995 and 2002, and the number of households receiving benefits within a municipality varies from between just under five percent in some areas to some 30 percent in others.

In the Gender Development Index (GDI) calculated for FYR Macedonia, it appears that there is relative equality between men and women, but a closer examination reveals differences in both income and life expectancy. Women earn about half as much as men. Women are discriminated against in the labour market, earning less than men throughout, but particularly in the informal economy. Such discrimination is against the law, but the law is not enforced. The socialist heritage regarding the labour market also impedes the hiring of women because they mandate generous maternity leave and other benefits that make women more expensive to hire than men. Thus women are least likely to find jobs and most likely to have low-paying jobs.

In the World Bank poverty assessment dated 1999, pensions are reported as being very important in reducing poverty – pensioners avoid falling into poverty because of their access to this steady income. However, pensions are based on past income, which is higher for men, and for urban employees, while agricultural pensions are the lowest, lower even than minimal pensions. Pensioners often also help their children economically; and may therefore be living in poverty although their pensions are sufficient to live fairly well.

Young people make up the vast majority of the unemployed. They are particularly affected by unemployment because of the organization of the labour market, where new workers are kept out of job openings by older workers, who are able to affect the hiring process through labour associations.

Ethnic minorities are noted as being less likely to be able to take full advantage of educational opportunities, to live in the underserved areas (except for Roma, who live in towns and cities) and to be unemployed or employed in the informal sector. They are underrepresented in the national statistics, and less likely to benefit from government programs. Roma and Albanian students are in general much less likely to go on to secondary schools than Macedonians.

Most key documents mention mainly the Roma when discussing ethnicity, and their poverty and 'outsider' status vis-à-vis the larger society is noted. The Roma are at risk in many respects; they live in poor quarters with poor sanitation; parents are often uneducated and unemployed, and

seldom encourage their children to finish school. Many street children are Roma.

Rural urban differences appear in relation to access to employment, the level of wages, and levels and possibilities of education. The 1999 World Bank study notes that social assistance is more important in rural areas, and that social benefits in the form of cash transfers are effectively targeted to meet the needs of the rural and urban poor, as compared to unemployment insurance and child subsidies, which are of less benefit to the poorest. This situation may well have changed, however.

Poverty is described, in all key documents, as being most widespread in rural areas, and in larger households with several unemployed adult members, or with a low level of education. Two thirds of the poor households live in rural areas, and the majority of the country is rural, with 40 per cent of the population living in village settlements. Almost two thirds of the countryside is experiencing depopulation, and permanent structural changes in agriculture, lack of off/farm employment, low quality infrastructure, low level of education, and an undeveloped entrepreneurial spirit are mentioned as factors pushing people to migrate. Rural poverty is heightened by the 'very significant concentration' of poor elderly households that cannot take advantage of the opportunities that do exist, and generate only small incomes from their activities.

The documents on Macedonia are lacking in a number of respects. In most documents data regarding the poor are aggregated. Additionally, there is a surprising lack of differentiation between the situations of different ethnic groups and power relations between them. We learn little about the different employment opportunities for Macedonians and Albanians, for example, or little about the different life situations of poor Macedonian and Albanian women, other than their different levels of educational achievement.

Although there is some mention of the groups we are searching for in this document, and some information about them, there is no sustained discussion of any group, and little mix between categories. Gender, ethnicity, and age and location are not correlated. Information about gender is only available in relation to education and earning capacity or income; most references to age concern pensions. Ethnicity comes up in relation to education. Thus there are a number of connections that are not made, which reduces the scope of the analysis and the usefulness of the information. There is no data about assets such as home or land ownership, vehicles, businesses. There is mention of informal sector work, but who are the entrepreneurs and employees? We do not receive any information about the kinds of strategies that poor people try to use to improve their overall situations.

Thus although the key documents show considerable variations both in content and analysis of poverty in FYR Macedonia, both aggregate and disaggregate information regarding poverty issues related to gender, ethnicity, location, age and social class is rather shallow and does not provide the reader with holistic views on the different aspects related to the process of poverty as experienced by different social categories. An assessment that focuses on people's own understanding and perceptions of poverty, constraints and opportunities, appear to be a prerequisite for successful identification process of sustainable poverty alleviation and social sector programmes.

A series of interviews with the poor was therefore carried out in FYR Macedonia as a complementary exercise to the existing documentation on poverty. These interviews spotlight limitations in the existing docu-

mentation and suggest a number of improvements in the analysis and understanding of poverty in relation to key social categories. Few key documents seem to realise the ethnical constraints experienced in FYR Macedonia, the difficult situation and the different strategies employed by women and youth in finding employment and income, the close relationship between ill health and lack of confidence for the future, the limited time and energy available for the poor to participate in associational life, or the different forms of entrepreneurship taking place in both urban and rural areas.

This modest interview-based assessment completed during November 2004 is an attempt to provide a more holistic view of poverty in Macedonia as understood and experienced by a number of individuals and families. The case studies are intended to reflect major concerns and opportunities, as identified by the individuals and families interviewed, and to shed some light on how poor families and individual themselves understand abstract expressions like poverty, empowerment and living conditions, and how these concepts form the individual's world-view and understanding of his or her livelihood. As these case studies indicate, material poverty cannot be separated from emotional stress, health, dignity or cultural wellbeing. Social and psychological factors are intimately connected to individuals and families, and the opportunities they perceive to improve their lives. Because of its limited scope, however, the assessment can only provide an indication as to how different individuals and families in a variety of social contexts understand poverty.

The Macedonian case studies suggest that the overall economic contraction experienced in Macedonia affects all aspects of life for the individual household, not least the emotional stress related to economic uncertainty and the expectations of the future. An important contribution to our understanding of poverty are the attitudes and work practices of different members of the public institutions and organisations that deal directly with the poor population. Insight into the work and institutional cultures of these organisations at different levels would greatly enhance our awareness of the positive and negative aspects of the mediators that act as interface between individuals and the state.

Poverty is obviously experienced and understood very differently by different social categories. Macedonian, Albanian, and Roma households had different strategies and access to resources, different expectations. Differences and similarities in gender, age, location, ethnic affiliation and social and economic hierarchies must be given a prominent position in a poverty analysis if we are to appreciate the complexities of poverty and understand the dynamics of individuals and households and their relationship to the society at large. Differences in division of labour as well as control and allocation of resources and money within households should constitute essential elements in a poverty assessment, to provide an improved understanding of decision-making, the distribution of power, and various sources of conflicts in different categories of households, and to define the parameters within which change is possible and households' strategies can be rethought and redefined.

All the families interviewed emphasised that job opportunities, security in their homes, access to money, social interaction between families and spouses, variation in diets and consumption, etc. varied considerably between the different seasons during the year. Seasonal variations are of considerable importance in terms of livelihood, production and consumption. It is clear that informal employment plays a determinant role in providing incomes to the household. Also, health, emotional well-be-

ing and the social security of an individual or a household are intimately connected to the perception of available economic and social resources. Health is not an independent variable.

Access, effects and control of information and resources are three main interconnected variables in understanding the process of empowerment of the different categories of the poor. While most official documents on poverty in Macedonia show a strong tendency to portray poor people in a numerical mode as a category of passive and deprived people, the case studies indicate that individuals, households and communities are actors and managers, producing and combining their limited resources in different ways in order to survive. Agency and managerial skills are required for survival, yet are barely discussed in poverty assessments.

1. A Discussion of the Content of Key Documents

The documents examined are divided into two groups depending on their purpose and ambition; there are three main strategy documents and three documents designed as assessments of a particular poverty-related issue or situation. The documents from The World Bank, UNICEF and the UNDP are ambitious assessments and they provide varying degrees of statistical information to illustrate their standpoints and recommendations to donors. They are focused, analytical documents, each providing a particular perspective on a development issue in the country, such as unemployment, children's rights, and decentralization. They are all based on substantial, identifiable research conducted by teams working for both international and national research and donor organizations.

The strategy documents, including Macedonia's interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PSRP), the European Union's Stabilisation and Association agreement with Macedonia and 2004 Progress Report, and Sida's own country strategy for Macedonia. These documents treat overarching concerns, and are intended to serve as general guidelines for development interventions. As such they are schematic in their discussions of poverty and poor groups.

1.1. National Human Development Report, UNDP

The *National Human Development Report 2004, FYR Macedonia. Decentralization for human development*, by the UNDP focuses on the issue of decentralization, and discusses development in the country from the perspective of the Human Development Index, a means of measuring development which takes into account life expectancy at birth, the adult literacy rate and the combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio, and the GDP per capita. It criticizes the restrictive macroeconomic policies of the transition period, which, although they have led to partial macroeconomic stability, have also led to a decline in the quality of life for a large number of people and an increase in inequality and poverty.

The report discusses the issue of decentralization; the need to bring government closer to the people, making it more knowledgeable about local conditions, more responsive to local needs, and more transparent and accountable. It notes the need to involve Macedonians in local government, and to take advantage of local capacities and participation in improving local conditions. The purpose of the document is to serve as a tool to foster dialogue between the government, civil society organizations, the academic world, donors, and international organizations.

Participatory processes were not used in the document in any way that is described.

A poverty perspective is not used so much as a human development perspective. Ethnic groups and different areas, rural and urban, are compared. Gender is also discussed. Thus, the document does make some tentative comparisons between groups of people and locations. The analysis is based on year 2002 census data from the State Statistical Office. Joblessness is described as one of the burning issues, and poverty is defined as 70% of the average annual income, which differs from the 60% of the World Bank and the I-PRSP. But poverty is measured in other ways as well, such as that of subjective poverty. Only 3.1 percent of the households surveyed felt that they were able to meet their needs through their monthly income, and nearly 70 per cent said that they were partly or fully unable to do so.

There is a lack of statistics and data available at the local level. The data used is based on a representative sample of municipalities chosen for their ethnicities, densities of population, communications and influences from neighbouring states. The 24 municipalities selected make up 19.4% of all the municipalities, and 63 per cent of the total population according to the 2002 census, which provides the data on which the analysis is based. The report, for the first time, calculates the human development level of municipalities, and confirms considerable discrepancies between rural and urban municipalities as well as between municipalities with different ethnic compositions. Urban municipalities rated higher than rural ones, especially in the area of education, where completed education rates are more prevalent in urban areas than rural ones. All urban municipalities are among those higher-ranked, and all rural municipalities are among the lower-ranked. In addition to having lower education levels, rural municipalities also have lower per capita income.

In terms of employment, the report indicates that employment rates do not keep up with economic (GDP) growth rates, suggesting that there is 'jobless growth'. The rate of poverty is 33.54 per cent. About three out of ten people live below the poverty line, which here is set at 70% of the median wage. Food expenditures make up an average of 40.6 per cent of household expenditures. The authors go on to note, however, that if one analyses poverty from the perspective of household expenditures (not income) only 22.7 per cent of the sample have expenditures below 70 percent of the median, a discrepancy that indicates the strength of the informal sector in the economy.

The number of welfare beneficiaries has increased continuously between 1995 and 2002. The number of households receiving benefits within a municipality varies from between just under 5 per cent to 31.47 per cent – another indication of the disparities between different municipalities. The employment rate is also distributed unevenly throughout the country; in 30 of the country's 123 municipalities, unemployment exceeds employment, they are up to 3 or more times higher than employment rates in seven municipalities. In Skopje, however, 2.7 times more people are employed than unemployed. Interestingly, the unemployment rates of the heavily Roma district in the municipality of Skopje is 2.3 times the employment rate, making them a 'pocket of poverty' in an otherwise more affluent area.

In an analysis of the Gender Development Index, also calculated for Macedonia for the first time with this report, it appears that there is relative equality between men and women. A closer examination, however, indicates that there are differences in both income and life expectancy.

Women live longer than men by five years, but throughout their lifetimes, they earn about half as much as men. Although women are not analysed as a 'poor group', the fact that women live longer but earn less means that they are more at risk for poverty as they grow older than men are. In terms of education, Roma and Albanian women lag behind Macedonians, and women behind men.

Pensioners are said to be highly affected by poverty; and they are more prevalent in urban populations than in rural areas. However, one can assume that there is a substantial poor, aged population without adequate pensions in rural areas. Age is important in poverty in another respect, that of employment of youth. The age group 20-24 has unemployment rates varying from 16 and 27 per cent, and from between 25-29, between 14 and 23 per cent.

Ethnic minorities are noted as being less likely to be able to take advantage of a number of benefits. They are less likely to be able to take full advantage of educational opportunities, to live in the underserved rural areas (except for Roma, who live in towns and cities) and to be unemployed or employed in the informal sector. They are underrepresented in the national statistics, and less likely to benefit from government programs (such as credits for business development). Ethnic based disparities with regard to gender are evident in the fact that as many Macedonian girls as boys participate in primary and secondary schooling, but the rates for Albanian, Roma and Turkish girls are much lower than their male counterparts when it comes to secondary education. The authors say that this may not be only due to cultural patterns, because the structure of employment opportunities may encourage girls to enter the labour force (in formal or informal ways) earlier than boys who could have more difficulties in gaining employment, especially in rural areas. Roma and Albanian students are in general much less likely to go on to secondary schools than Macedonians.

This document has a more holistic view than the others in this study. It views poverty from a number of areas; the usual ones that include education, health and employment, but it also includes representation and ethnic affiliation, and to some degree, location. By focusing on the concept of representation, of decentralizing and moving government closer to the people, the authors are able to move their point of analysis closer to populations. This leads to the question of opportunities, and the ability to make choices. The comparison between urban and rural areas and ethnic groups contributes substantially, and the report is able to demonstrate what other documents only suggest – that ethnicity is a factor in predicting poverty. The discussion of ethnic groups is all the more interesting compared with the apparent avoidance of this subject in the other reports.

This is the most recent of the assessments (excepting the short World Bank Concept Papers) and draws on more recent data (from the 2002 census) which makes a more complete analysis possible. Perhaps it is the first of more complex documents that may emerge. However, it is important to point out that 'the poor' are not the specific focus of this report. It is about decentralization. Groups are aggregated, and there is a need to separate out gender and ethnicity for a more informed comparison of poor groups.

1.2. Situation Analysis of Children and Families, UNICEF

The *FYR Macedonia Situation Analysis of Children and Families*, produced by the Unicef Skopje Office in the year 2000, is an assessment that focuses on children's rights and how they are implemented and protected in

Macedonia as of the year 2000. It discusses the services which are set up to protect children's rights, in particular health care, education and social protection, but also the need for children to grow up in families, and the influence that the attitudes that the people around them – at school and in the community – have on their development. The report first discusses the economy, ethnicity, the family, and the Kosovo crisis (which took place just before the report was finished). It goes on to discuss ten top issues for children and families in Macedonia, and then makes a more in-depth analysis of child rights, health and nutrition, education, child protection, and youth. The intended use of the document is as a guide for NGOs, donors and local communities who are planning programs for children.

The report is holistic in its analysis, and the sources are consistently documented. Most of the numerical data come from the 1999 Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Macedonia, or the Statistical Office. Some information, however, comes from a report compiled by the Ministry of Education in 1999, entitled 'Education for All', and a Unicef report on 'The situation of children in the system of juvenile justice in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (1999)', as well as recent World Bank reports.

Poverty is not a subject of this report as such, thus poverty is not mainstreamed in the document nor defined. It is about the situation of children and families in general, not specifically about the poor. It does, however, point to problems in children's rights such as health and education, and these are quite often related to poverty, or to a lack of particular resources. Rural and urban differences are mentioned in these contexts, as is ethnicity, and to some extent, gender. Trends are described to a certain extent, in that the report points out what the government is doing or planning in some sectors, and progress that has been made. Participatory process were used in a part of the report dealing with youth, in which university students informally interviewed some of their peers concerning their knowledge about and attitudes towards smoking and drugs, sexual health, computers, career advice, media and self-help.

The paper emphasizes the precarious state of the Macedonian economy in the year 2000, citing unemployment figures, especially those for youth. Ethnic minorities are less likely to be employed than Macedonians. However, it is noted that the country also had a substantial and growing grey economy, many full-time workers were recorded as unemployed or as students, and that a number also worked in both the public and the private sectors.

It is pointed out that the ethnic makeup of the country is gradually shifting, with the Albanian population growing more rapidly than other groups. The Roma and Turkish minorities are fairly stable, although about 5,500 Roma remain in Macedonia after the Kosovo crisis and are unlikely to return. Thus today's children are growing up in a somewhat different ethnic mix than their parents did.

The effect of the Kosovo crisis on Macedonia is briefly described. Although the vast majority of refugees returned to their homes as soon as possible, about 9,000 stayed, 5,500 of which are Roma and are a very poor part of the population.

Poor groups are not specifically discussed in this document, but there is a good bit of discussion of gender, ethnicity and location in terms of issues having to do with children's rights and child protection. Children are often aggregated in discussions of health and education, for example, but occasionally gender or ethnic groups are separated out. Children and youth tend to be discussed together, other than in respect to levels of education, and the great difficulties youth have entering the labour

market. There is some discussion of the limitations of institutions dealing with children and youths with special needs, such as orphanages, institutions for children with behavioural problems and correctional facilities (the two latter of which mainly deal with youth). In the last section of the report, results from a small number of interviews with high school and university youth concerning matters such as drugs and alcohol, sexual health, access to computers, and faith in the future are reviewed. These youths have a better standard of living and higher level of education than the average for Macedonian youth, however.

Gender is discussed in the context of education. While enrolment in primary school is nearly universal, one child in ten drops out before finishing the compulsory eight years. Most of these are girls. Many who drop out leave school between the fourth and the fifth year, and the report indicates that this may be due to cultural factors; the girls are about eleven years old and may be taken out of school to prepare them for marriage. Most of the school leavers belong to the Roma or Albanian ethnic groups. In high school and college, male and female ratios are fairly even, and slightly more women attend tertiary education.

The rural – urban contrast is visible in questions of water and sanitation. While urban standards of sanitation are good, except in some peripheral communities, only 40% of rural households have some form of latrine, and a third of them lack a piped water supply. The problem is particularly acute among the Roma. Living in a rural area may also be a problem regarding schools, which are in bad repair and worse in rural areas. Travel often becomes a necessity if one lives in a village and wants to attend secondary school in ones' native language. Since primary, and to some degree secondary school is taught in the native language (Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish or Serbian), children from different ethnicities do not mix much in school, which may lead to increased ethnic friction in the long run.

Levels of poverty are described regarding the Roma, which are mentioned by far the most in terms of ethnicity. The problem of street children, many of them Roma, is discussed. The Roma are at risk in many respects; they live in poor quarters with poor sanitation, parents are often uneducated (did not finish primary school) and unemployed. They seldom encourage their children to finish school, and Roma children often become parents themselves at an early age.

The strength of this document is its in-depth focus on the situation of children, and its interpretation of the available statistics, reports, and interviews. What is lacking is a more specific focus on location and ethnicity, and poverty as such. We see nothing about the ways in which girls are educated – formally or informally – differently than boys. There is little information about how choices of careers break down between genders. Although there is some information about different ethnic groups, we learn little about how ethnic differences are reflected in society. Although more categories and specific information about them emerge than in other documents, these are not compared in a coherent way, which would give us a picture of the life conditions and opportunities/constraints that particular groups in different locations have to deal with.

1.3. Focusing on the Poor, World Bank

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Focusing on the Poor produced by the World Bank in 1999 centres on unemployment and poverty, and evaluates the impact of national anti-poverty programs such as education and social benefits. It assesses the pro-poor impact of these measures, dis-

cussing which of them are appropriately targeting the poor, and in what ways; and which could be eliminated. Poverty is mainstreamed throughout the document, the goal of which is to provide information for policies and programs that focus on the poor, who are defined as those whose consumption falls below 60% of the median annual 1996 adult equivalent consumption, or about 50 USD per month (in 1999).

The analysis is based on data collected in the Household Budget Surveys (HBS) conducted by the State Statistical Office between 1990 and 1996, and it also uses data from an add-on household survey conducted in 1996 to collect more robust information on socio-economic groups. Information on cash transfers in the social benefits programs were collected in the HBS carried out in the first half of 1997. A qualitative Social Assessment evaluating poverty was done in 1998, and is also drawn on in the report. Trends in poverty are discussed. The data used (and the definition of poverty) is the same as in Macedonia's I-PRSP, and it is evident on reading the I-PSRP, which was written later, that it relied heavily on this document's data and perspective as to the cause and extent of poverty.

The report largely views poverty through the lens of unemployment. It points out that poverty has increased because consumption has decreased, and the loss of jobs and fall in 'real wages' are the immediate cause of falling consumption, and thus poverty. While public sector workers (with relatively good wages) are gradually decreasing in number due to job cuts and factory closings, jobs are being generated in the private sector. They are primarily low-paying jobs, however, and employ the less educated (and are probably located in the expanding service sector).

Those who are least educated are the most affected by unemployment, and have a more difficult time finding jobs. This is true across all age groups. Lack of education is thus seen as one of the main causes of poverty. Sixty per cent of those working have secondary education or more, yet 60 per cent of the work force has primary school (8 year) or less (30 per cent have not finished primary school). Educational trends are improving, however, with recent graduates completing more years of education than their parents.

The increasing informalisation of the economy is discussed in some detail, and is reported to be taking place because of old 'socialist' laws that still control job mobility and wage levels, and make the labour market rigid and out of step with the transition to a free market economy. Many people now work in the informal sector, or in seasonal jobs. In urban areas, they tend to be salespeople, seamstresses, bartenders, taxi drivers. Men do physical work, as masons, painters, tile-layers, loaders of goods. Women do knitting, weaving, sewing, and may work as seamstresses, cleaning ladies, or in prostitution. In rural areas, men are labourers, herd cattle, collect moss, mushrooms, herbs, and wood. Women are frequently active in the agricultural sector, picking fruit, harvesting sugar turnips, or growing tobacco on rented land with inputs advanced to them by the future buyers. They also have seasonal employment in hotels in tourist areas. Informal and seasonal work tends to be arduous, there is a long search to find it, wages are low, and the work lasts only for a short period, usually during the summer. This makes it hard to save for winter needs. Informal sector and seasonal workers are also facing competition from laid off urban workers, and illegal migrants, who further drive down wages. Because of this situation, working abroad is regarded as important source of income, when possible. Younger people (mostly Albanian) may be able to go to Italy, Switzerland, or Slovenia to work (physical labour) for 5 or 6 months.

Starting a business is seen as a prospective way of escaping poverty. Contrary to other documents, it is stated that people have a lot of ideas; but credits are hard to obtain and are also expensive. Some of those who do begin a small business report that they are plagued by the need to bribe officials and inspectors, and by taxes that are felt to be unfair; such as that on unsold inventory. In general, the business climate is not felt to be propitious, according to the document. Thus some also become involved in illegal or semi-legal trade, such as the resale of goods bought abroad, or smuggling.

There is substantial discussion of gender differences in employment, and of the problems of youth (in entering the labour market) and the position of older people, particularly pensioners. There is very little discussion of the main ethnic groups, although there is some mention of the multiple problems faced by the Roma population.

Women are discriminated against in the labour market, especially in the informal sector. They are the least paid, young or old (as are manual workers with primary or lower education, especially those in agriculture). Women earn less than men throughout; 15 percent less in the public sector (where wages are higher) and 40 percent less in private sector. This is against the law, but the law is not enforced. The socialist heritage regarding the labour market also make it harder for companies to hire women, because they have to provide generous maternity leave and other benefits that make women more expensive to hire than men. Thus women are least likely to find jobs and most likely to have low-paying jobs.

Age is of substantial importance in the labour market, and thus in access to income and potential vulnerability. Older people are less likely to be educated and more likely to have lower wages and be poorer. Younger people on the other hand, are less likely to be employed at all. They are particularly affected by unemployment because of the organization of the labour market, where new workers are kept out of job openings by older workers, who are able to affect the hiring process through labour associations. The vast majority of the unemployed are young people; only a quarter of the unemployed have been laid off from previous jobs.

Pensions are reported as being very important in reducing poverty, and in this report pensioners are reported to be able to avoid falling into poverty because of their access to this steady income. However, pensions are based on past income, which is higher for men, and for urban employees. Agricultural pensions are the lowest, even lower than minimal pensions. Pensioners often also feel the need to help their children economically; since many have children whose families are suffering. Therefore they may in fact be poor, although their pensions are sufficient to live fairly well. Pensions are a great cost to the government, but do significantly reduce poverty, which would be twice as high without them.

The Roma are the ethnic group most discussed in this document, always in the context of their poverty and 'outsider' status vis-à-vis the larger society. Albanians are mentioned occasionally, as for example, in the note that Albanian youth sometimes migrate to Italy, Switzerland and Slovenia for short-term informal labour. It is noted that Albanians as a group are underrepresented in the Household Budget Survey that the study is based on. Ethnicity comes up in relation to education, in that it can be difficult for children in mountainous rural areas (Albanians) to attend school in the winter, and that one may have to travel to receive schooling in one's native tongue, increasing costs and general difficulties for the poor. Roma in particular can be made to feel as 'guests' at schools because they attend irregularly, and thus do not feel welcome.

Rural urban differences appear in relation to access to employment, level of wages, levels and possibilities of education. It is noted that social assistance is more important in rural areas, and that it is stated that social benefits in the form of cash transfers are effectively targeted to meet the needs of the rural and urban poor, as compared to unemployment insurance and child subsidies, which are of less benefit to the poorest.

Although there is some mention of the groups we are searching for in this document, and some information about them, there is no sustained discussion of any group, and little mix between categories. Gender, ethnicity, and age are not correlated. Information about gender is only available in relation to earning capacity or income, as most references to age concern pensions. Ethnicity comes up in relation to education. Connections are not made, which reduces the scope of the analysis.

Although this paper focuses on poverty there is no discussion of assets, such as home or land ownership, vehicles, businesses. There is mention of informal sector work, but who are the employers or entrepreneurs? What groups tend to start businesses, and whom do they employ? What kind of expertise do they have which makes starting a business viable? What areas of the country are more or less entrepreneurial?

The strength of the document is that it does focus on the poor, but its weakness lies in its one-dimensional way of looking at poverty – as a result of decreased spending due to lack of employment – a rather uni-dimensional and uninformed way of analysing an intricate phenomenon in a complex society.

Two methodological papers concerning the collection and analysis of data on poverty in Macedonia should be mentioned in connection with this poverty assessment. They are concept papers written for the World Bank; *FYR Macedonia: Poverty Assessment. Concept Paper, working draft, 2004*, and *Poverty in Macedonia: What we know, what we don't, and what we should*, draft for discussion, written by Ruslan Yemtsov for ECSPE (Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit) in 2004.

These documents are brief theoretical papers written for use within the World Bank. The first concerns the need for improved data collection on poverty in Macedonia, especially regarding sample size and representativeness. It reports on the progress that has been made so far, what remains to be done, and draws up a work plan to meet data collection needs for a Poverty Assessment program, describing how forthcoming reports could be structured in time. The second paper is an assessment of hitherto available data. It assesses what other types of information are needed to provide a more complete description of poverty in the country, and to what extent such information is available. Finally, it indicates the analytical areas where more information needs to be collected and processed. The papers point out that the Statistical Office is reluctant to change its methods of data collection or to release data to outside researchers (concerns about protection of those interviewed); and that in some cases, such as in regard to ethnic data, they do not publish any analyses themselves, either. Thus information does exist which could be used to produce deeper, more useful analyses, but this is not being done for reasons which include resistance to change, data sensitivity, institutional capacity, and differing priorities. Much improvement could be made without great economic investment.

Yemtsov's paper synthesizes the data available for the period 1997-2002, which was generated after the completion of the World Bank's *Focusing on the Poor* report in 1999. He problematizes the use of data, discussing poverty lines, the use of income vs. expenditure measures,

weighting and comparability. He discusses the importance of taking into account non-income measures of poverty and deprivation such as education, housing, health, environment, security, powerlessness, and subjective poverty, and he adds information on security and environment, for example, but unfortunately the data is still in aggregated form. Then, he summarizes what is known about poverty in relation to employment, education, health, gender, children and the aged, rural areas, and so on, pointing out discrepancies in the existing data, and areas where there are indications that assumptions are incorrect and further work is needed. In general, the recently emerging data on poverty shows that the situation in the country is far from uniform; ethnic groups are more disadvantaged than the majority especially regarding employment. Although Yemtsov's paper does not provide more information about poverty as regards the categories we are discussing, and the data he does add is aggregated in form, the paper is useful because of its analysis of validity of the data which does exist, and indication of what is lacking, particularly as regards non-income factors affecting poverty.

In these three assessments of poverty we begin to get a picture of the economic situation of different groups. The situation faced by women is discussed in relation to work and to wages. It is noted that women in some ethnic groups have less access to education. Children's rights are discussed in the UNICEF report, and in general they are mentioned in relation to the data on education. Elderly people and pensioners also appear, either as relatively better-off, or as worse off, depending on the analyst and the time of analysis. Rural/urban differences come up in all these documents, with rural areas described as more deficient in employment and educational possibilities, and in living conditions. Any analysis of ethnicity is missing, except as refers to the Roma population, but the UNDP document does indicate that there are substantial economic differences between ethnic groups and regions of the country dominated by particular groups. Still, we do not get a by any means complete description of poverty in Macedonia. There is no correlation between criteria, and no discussion of the breadth of non-income factors of poverty, such as power structures and relationships, access to assets and natural resources, household survival strategies and domestic shocks and crises.

The following papers are not assessments but overviews of Macedonia that are meant to serve as guides in programming development assistance. As such they do not contain the amount of data presented in the assessments; rather they are more synthesizing in nature.

1.4. Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

The *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (Interim Version) November, 2000*, states that poverty in Macedonia has been increasing in recent years, as in most of the transition economies. The Interim PRSP is part of the government's commitment to fight poverty, a "temporary" document, put in place during the twelve months that the government is preparing a complete Poverty Reduction Strategy. Its aim is to describe what is currently (in 2000) known about poverty in Macedonia, to summarize the existing elements of a poverty reduction strategy, and make suggestions until a complete strategy is put in place. It contains a Policy Matrix for the years 2000-2003, indicating which projects and reforms were ongoing or planned at the time of writing, their objectives, and which donor agencies were supporting these initiatives.

The paper was compiled through a participatory process involving Ministers of Development, Labour, Health and Finance and representa-

tives from these ministries, as well as from universities and research institutes. Local experts were commissioned to produce background papers on the existing research on poverty since the Kosovo crisis, on findings from focus group research on perceptions of poverty among different social groups (although these findings cannot be discerned in the text), and a first version of a communications and participation plan for the full PRSP process. Representatives of civil society who were active in the field of poverty reduction, representatives of minority groups, trade unions, political parties, and key local NGOs were also consulted (though their input is largely invisible in the document). An ambitious participatory plan is in place for the construction of the full PRSP, presented in an annex to the document. One notes, however, that the poor themselves are unlikely to be able to make their voices heard in these consultations. If poor groups of the society are to contribute in any meaningful way, they ought to be targeted specifically and it should be indicated in what ways their contribution will be incorporated into and reflected in the end product.

Poverty is described as being the result of a fall in aggregate consumption during the 1990's and a rise in economic inequality. Factors that are listed as having contributed to the deterioration of economic life are drastic decreases in economic activity, fall in real wages, pensions and other incomes, increases in income differences in the population, privatization and other structural reforms, solvency and liquidity problems in banks and enterprises, and high deficits of the off-budget social funds. The poor are defined as the households with less than 60% of median household income (the official poverty line of about USD 75 per month in 1996 prices) – this group makes up about 20% of the total population. The incidence of poverty is estimated and reported on the basis of the government's annual household budget survey. An expanded sample was used in 1996 as part of a poverty assessment conducted jointly with the World Bank (and discussed at length in the World Bank document *Focusing on the Poor*, 1999). Discussions are said to be ongoing with the World Bank and other donors to support a Living Standards Measurement Survey, which would provide a more detailed picture of poverty in the country.

The statistics in the report contain one section with Selected Economic Indicators such as GDP, consumer prices, balance of payments, external debt, fiscal accounts and monetary indicators; and another with Selected Interim Monitoring Indicators, containing life expectancy, mortality and primary school enrolment rates for 1990, 1995 and 1998. The source of the data is not given, but one assumes that they are government statistics.

A poverty perspective is mainstreamed throughout the document, but the perspective is not necessarily in terms of groups or categories of poor people. There is discussion of the nature of poverty in rural versus urban areas, and a limited discussion of age; also in relation to rural poverty. In general, poverty is seen in terms of unemployment and lack of skills or education, and consequently improved education and job generation are recommended as ways to reduce poverty. A trend of increasing poverty is identified as the result of people losing their jobs as problem companies are closed or liquidated. Certain socially vulnerable groups are indicated to be at a high risk for increased poverty; these are the unemployed, socially imperilled households, pensioners and small-scale farmers.

The poor are divided into three socioeconomic groups in the document:²

Traditional poor	Small-scale rural agricultural households with more than three children
New poor	Low-paid employees, the unemployed, pensioners Social benefit recipients
Chronically poor	Aged without pensions, the disabled Aged rural households without fixed income Those unable to work and small chances of escaping poverty despite economic growth

Poverty is described as being most widespread in rural areas, and in larger households with several unemployed adult members, or with a low level of education. Two thirds of poor households live in rural areas – 87 per cent of Macedonia is described as rural, with 40 per cent of the population living in rural settlements. Almost two thirds of the countryside is experiencing depopulation, however, with permanent structural changes in agriculture, lack of off/farm employment, low quality infrastructure, low level of education, and an undeveloped entrepreneurial spirit are mentioned as factors pushing people to migrate. Rural poverty is heightened by the ‘very significant concentration’ of poor elderly households who cannot take advantage of the opportunities that do exist, and generate only small incomes from their activities. Some of poorest have only a small pension or social assistance benefits to help them survive. The overall rate of poverty for rural areas was 25.1 percent (in 1998), while it was 13.9 in Skopje, the capital, and 21.5 in provincial cities. Poverty of the elderly rose two percent between 1996 and 1998, and five per cent for families with young children. Unfortunately there is no discussion of gender or ethnicity in the context of rural poverty, which would make the picture more complete.

Most poor families have multiple members and low educational status, and these are described as socially more isolated with a higher mortality rate. This, along with the five per cent increase in the rate of poverty among families with children, could mean that children and youth are more at risk. Rural children, Muslims (especially females), and Roma are groups which are cited as being most at risk when it comes to low educational achievement.

The link between unemployment and poverty is considerable in urban areas; in rural areas it increases the risk of poverty. The privatization of state-owned companies has had a great impact on the labour market. Registered employment has contracted by 39 percent since 1989, and now stands at the 1975 level. One third of the adult labour force is unemployed. Unemployment rates for the young, the uneducated (with primary education or less) and women oscillate around 40 per cent. Three quarters of the unemployed have been seeking a job for over four years. The document suggests that the most vulnerable groups in the labour force are poorly-qualified middle-aged people who have lost their jobs, first-time job seekers, people employed in companies with uncertain futures, the self-employed in the farming sector, and large families in rural areas. This information indicates that the unemployed poor are likely to be youth, women, the less educated, and rural people. Information on the impact of ethnicity on poverty is missing here.

² These groups are taken from the World Bank document *Focusing on the Poor*, 1999.

This document goes much further than the two previous ones in discussing poverty in terms of social groups and categories. While the poor are aggregated in general, in parts of the discussion attempts are made to separate them out. Older people are particularly likely to be poor, especially in the countryside. Young people with little education have the most trouble finding a job. Children in large rural families are at risk.

There is little information about gender or ethnicity in the context of poverty. We learn that a larger percentage of women than men are unemployed, and Muslim girls are less likely to go to school. The Roma are noted as being at risk in both education and employment. But little is said about disparities in poverty in the two major ethnic groups that make up the nation. The social characteristics of ethnic groups are not elaborated.

Poverty is discussed in terms of unemployment and education in this paper; poverty is a result of the problems of transition, economic contraction, necessary reforms and inadequate education, not of ones' ethnicity, gender, or place of residence. The role of cultural issues, power and possibilities of accessing resources, coercion and silencing, and circumstances affecting poverty are not elaborated.

1.5. European Partnership Agreement with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the FYROM Stabilization and Association Report

The *COUNCIL DECISION on the principles, priorities, and conditions contained in the European Partnership with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Presented by the Commission of the European Communities, 2004)* and *Commission Staff Working Paper FYROM Stabilization and Association Report 2004* proceed from the European Union. The first is the Partnership Agreement (PA) between Macedonia and the EU. Such agreements are a means of intensifying the Stabilization and Association process (SAP). They identify priorities for action to support efforts to harmonize the structures in the country with those of the EU, and provide guidance for financial assistance to the country. The plan is tailored to Macedonia's specific needs and stage of preparation, and is divided into short term and mid-term priorities. It also incorporates plans for action agreed upon at other conferences and meetings held within the EU aegis. Thus the partnership is basically an action plan, indicating what needs to be done politically, economically, and administratively. Progress in implementing the priorities set out in the partnership is monitored through annual SAP reports, such as the one here discussed, for 2004. The documents are intended to be used as a guide for donors in the coordination of their assistance to Macedonia.

The two papers from the EU reflect each other, in that the first is a list of proposals and an action plan for reform and the second discusses the extent of progress to date. Neither discusses poverty as such; poverty is not defined, and the documents do not mention the categories of people we are examining in this study in relation to poverty. There is a brief discussion of the need to adopt a strategic plan for the equitable representation of minorities, and to improve public administration in relation to the ongoing decentralization process. Respect for human rights and minority rights should be more firmly established. Market-oriented economic reforms must be pursued, the business environment improved, especially regarding the legal framework and the financial sector, and a comprehensive strategy needs to be developed to promote employment. In the mid-term, a social policy should be developed to 'promote social cohesion, effective social protection systems, improve social standards

and address poverty and social exclusion.’ These are policies that relate to decreasing poverty but they are not discussed in this context, but in that of EU accession. The SA Report points out that the unemployment rate has increased by five percent from 2003, to 37%, but also that the large grey economy, or informal economy, may influence the reliability of employment statistics. In another section it notes that EC humanitarian assistance to the country was progressively phased out in 2002, due to an overall improvement in the humanitarian situation in the country.

Most of the data presented in the reports focus on national accounts, the balance of payments, public finances, and external trade. However, in the section on the labour market it shows that while the trend for male employment is slightly decreasing between 1998-2002, it is slightly increasing for women, and the unemployment rate for youth (under age 25) is decreasing but still roughly 25% higher than the mean. Employment in agriculture and forestry, industry and construction is decreasing, but in services it is increasing.

Regarding gender, the SA report notes that the principle of equal salaries and of equal treatment of men and women concerning employment, training, career advancement and working conditions has been introduced, and that a National Action Plan for Gender Equality has been established by the government. Activities are also being undertaken to increase women’s participation in the governmental decision-making structures, and to strengthen their socioeconomic position in society. But the results of these measures are not elaborated.

In the question of minorities, the same report notes that a state university is being established in Tetovo, a primarily Albanian ethnic area, providing the first possibility for higher education in the Albanian language in Macedonia. It mentions the Roma population briefly, noting their discrimination regarding social services, education and employment. Other than this, discussions referring to the categories we are examining are lacking.

The strength of these documents are their comprehensiveness – an examination of them gives the reader an understanding of the challenges involved in restructuring and reforming Macedonia as it strives to become a “modern” democracy. Most of the emphasis is on macro-political and administrative issues. The reports recognize many of the same problems present in other countries of the region. There is, however, little information about the situation on the ground and in local communities. People as such are not visible, and social issues are not even discussed in aggregate form. The limited discussion and analysis of poverty and the groups of people who are affected in these documents is likely to have an impact on the shape of development assistance to Macedonia.

1.6. Country Strategy for Development Cooperation with Macedonia

The *Swedish Country strategy for development cooperation with Macedonia, January 2003 – December 2005* is an eleven-page document outlining the extent, direction and aims of cooperation during a two-year period, and is “based on an evaluation of the present situation in the country and on a needs assessment of future development cooperation.”

According to the document, the primary focus of cooperation is to be democratic governance (institution building, human rights and democracy) and support for economic development (agriculture, financial services and the private sector). Cooperation is to be deepened in these areas, with additional country-specific projects to be undertaken in the fields

of environment and HIV/AIDS. It is noted that gender equality aspects are to be taken into consideration and that support for special projects to increase gender equality “must be extended.”

The paper notes that Macedonia is one of the poorest countries in the Western Balkans, but it does not discuss or define poverty. Rather, it points out that support measures should be harmonized with those of other major multilateral and bilateral donors. The document explains that Swedish strategy vis-à-vis Macedonia is grounded in the assumption that the country will, with time, achieve political and economic stability and successfully merge with the EU. Thus the EU strategy for the Western Balkans, in the form of the Stabilization and Association process (SAP), provides the overall framework for Sida’s cooperation with Macedonia, and support measures should be harmonized with the efforts of other donors, particularly the EU and other major multilateral and bilateral donors. The country’s work on a PSRP documents is seen as important in this context, and should be supported but also be harmonized with EU strategy.

Perhaps because of the macro-level scope of the paper, there is no definition of poverty and scant attention to gender, age, ethnicity or location of poverty. There is no mainstreaming of a poverty perspective. Poverty is mentioned in some contexts, although diffusely; it is noted that the economy is ‘beset by difficulties’ regarding privatization strategies and support for a market economy, that production methods are outdated and that many people have lost jobs and incomes. Growing discontent among the Albanian population since independence in 1991 resulted in an armed conflict in 2001, and the conflict had negative repercussions for the economy. It is stated that ethnic relations remain tense, although some progress is being made.

When discussing the private economic sector in Macedonia, the paper does note that ‘Although there is in general little outright poverty in typical rural areas, where families can secure a livelihood from the land, many people live in straitened circumstances. In the cities, on the other hand, real poverty may be found among marginalized groups. Unemployment remains largely unchanged at 32-35 per cent and some 22 per cent of the population live in conditions of poverty.’ (p.3)

Further, it is pointed out that there is no official data or assessment of the situation of women, and that conditions vary between ethnic groups. However, ‘there are many well-qualified, well-educated women employed in the government ministries and by international NGOs operating at the local level. Women make up 17.5 per cent of the members of the Macedonian parliament’. This is the extent of the discussion of specific groups based on gender, age, ethnicity and location of the poor.

The paper provides a good, quick, broad snapshot of the country and its challenges, and indicates the orientation of Sida cooperation in the country, as well as some specific areas which have been targeted, and where programs are currently underway, or planned. It goes on to discuss lessons learned from earlier cooperation activities, and the current activities of other donors. It notes that a participant-oriented approach is effective when trying to establish local ownership, to avoid donor-driven processes and to achieve sustainable results. These are its strengths.

There is almost no mention of poverty as such in the Sida strategy paper and no discussion at all of poor groups of people. We learn nothing about the breakdown of the percentage of poor in the country, how this group looks in terms of gender or ethnicity. We do not know anything about social categories particularly at risk. The focus is on structural

needs; on how Macedonia can move closer to EU accession, and on the need for development assistance to be deployed to meet these ends. The assumption is that as the country moves toward political stability and EU harmonization, citizens' economic situation will improve; but there is no concrete indication of how this will happen.

The three strategy papers thus provide limited background information to serve as a base for understanding the nature of poverty in Macedonia. They contain a minimal discussion of gender, almost no mention of ethnicity, little reference to age (pensioners or the aged are mentioned, but children only in the context of increasing a family's likelihood of being poor). Rural and urban poverty do appear in the texts, but there is some disagreement as to where poverty is more pressing – among urban people who have lost their jobs, or rural dwellers. Throughout the texts there is a lack of interrelation of variables. In general we see little of the situation 'on the ground', descriptions, such as they are, concern aggregates. Thus it is difficult to put a face on the poor, to understand local conditions that causes and reproduce poverty.

1.7. Poverty: Gaps in Knowledge

How do we understand poverty in Macedonia after reading these reports? The impression is that the documents have merely scratched the surface of what one might be able to know, of what one might need to know. Poverty, as presented, is not multi-dimensional and complex – it is rather a function of finding a job, completing an education. If one is a member of the younger generation or a minority group or lives in a rural area, one is less likely to find a job or to complete an education. Certain factors can combine to make a person more subject to poverty – living in a large rural family, for example, or being an aged woman from a rural area.

These analyses are relatively simplistic compared to the real-life experience of poverty. As a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, poverty is related to most aspects of life, not only to income and access to health and education. It is a function of being able, or not being able, to make oneself heard in society, at the local and national level – poor people seldom find a medial, or a common voice, and often have more difficulties expressing themselves. Poverty makes it more difficult to organize politically, from both an economic and a psychological standpoint, and it makes it more difficult for organizations to access information and to stay together over time and work concertedly towards particular ends.

Poverty is also a function of structures of ownership, and of being able to document ownership of land, housing and other goods, of being able to turn property into collateral for loans, and having effective ways to save. It also depends on the definition of, and access to commons, such as municipal land, fishing rights, hunting rights, and on how such rights are used. It has to do with networks and structures of trust within and between communities, on the existence of, or lack of, cooperation between neighbours. It is related to exchange, not only in the sense of one's relative position of power in market transactions, but also the possibility of exchanges of information, goods, labour, services. In many situations poor people survive more because of their non-monetary resources than their purely economic resources. But these issues are rarely measured or documented in the documents analyzed in this study.

Peoples' opportunities are dependent on a socially constructed bundle of assumptions and beliefs about individuals' rights and potentials. What should be legislated, and are the responsibilities of the individual?

Who deserves help? What are the characteristics of different women, and what are their positions in their households, in the society? What are the different roles of children? What does the 'rule of law' mean? The question of security per se has direct bearing on poverty – the poor are more likely to see their rights disappear and to be mistreated at the hands of the law – and this produces real economic losses.

Cultural perceptions play a role in poverty, both in shaping one's access to those resources available in one's society, but also in the shaping of the resources that society 'puts out there' for citizens in terms of education, health, voice, rights and duties. How are policies structured, and how are they perceived by different social groups?

Considering the above and what we learn about poverty in Macedonia from the documents studied, it may be concluded that there are considerable gaps in knowledge. Much of it is related to non-income aspects of poverty. In regard to the categories examined, we need to know how gender differences may be reflected in the different ethnic groups, and correlated with schooling, and with the rural and urban settings. Women's role in the growing informal economy is unclear – it seems likely that women are very active in a grey economy, undocumented as workers, but working. What rights do women in different groups have in their families, and regarding property? Are they emerging as entrepreneurs?

Pensioner's economic situation is also unclear. The UNDP report identifies them as a poor segment of the population, while earlier documents indicate that pensions help reduce poverty and that pensioners are able to help their unemployed offspring. It is far from clear how benefits are distributed in urban and rural areas, and what other sources of income are open to the aged. Poverty's impact on children and youth is really only discussed in terms of schooling and access to health care, but this discussion must be much more profound.

Other poverty-related processes, such as the rural-urban divide, need considerable clarification. The I-PSRP says that 87 per cent of the Macedonian population is rural, while a World Bank concept paper (discussed below) says that a majority of population is urban. What criteria are used? How is the population distributed across the countryside? What effect does this spread have on employment, access to economic and natural resources, networks, community building?

These documents arise out of differing needs and research foci. Although they are informative, a great deal of the information – historical background, policy analysis, recommendations – is of limited relevance to this study. It is frustrating to see the lack of fine-grained and thoughtful information on poverty in Macedonia. Nonetheless, a minimal baseline of knowledge about poverty has been established. From a general point of view, the UNDP document is the most productive, as it uses newer and more complete data, which provide the possibility of ranking and comparing municipalities with different ethnic makeup, thereby producing a more complex depiction of poverty. But poverty assessments that also analyses the non-income dimensions of poverty are needed.

In this desk study, methodological questions are relevant on three levels. There are the assumptions and methods that lie behind the production of the documents – the extent to which they provide a holistic vision of poverty, use participative methods, allow the voices of the poor to emerge, cite sources and clarify how they have interpreted them.

Secondly, there is the methodology behind data collection. The World Bank's *Focusing on the Poor* contains a great deal of data, as does the UNDP report. The World Bank concept papers, however, note the

weaknesses in data collection and the discrepancies that occur due to changes in collection methods, as well as problems in interpretation. The data that are available naturally steer the focus of reports, as do the gaps in data. But what is available and what is not is largely a result of how poverty is conceptualized among researchers, and the processes that are considered to have an impact on increasing or decreasing it.

Thirdly, there is the methodology of this study itself; the choice of key documents and the key variables in the analysis of poverty. It is acknowledged that the format of the study allows very little description of each document. Because of the constraints of space, and to better indicate what terms of analysis are missing in the documents and the extent to which their absence limits knowledge, we have chosen to add two matrixes in an annex to this study (See Annex A, Parts 1 and 2). In the first, we lay out the methodology of the main documents here analyzed, showing some methods and means of representation that they have used, or not used. In the second, we ranked the documents according to aspects of poverty analysis that they do cover to some extent, such as employment, education, and health. We added aspects that are covered occasionally, such as living conditions and empowerment, and also added other important aspects of poverty which the documents do not cover, such as household survival strategies, access to natural resources, and domestic shocks and crises. The ranking scale ranges from 0 to 3, with 0 indicating no coverage, 1 indicating a brief mention, 2 indicating several mentions or slight discussion, and 3 indicating a more reasoned discussion. In this way we have hoped to provide a schematic overview of what is discussed – and what is not discussed – in the key documents on Macedonia.

Sida's *Perspectives on Poverty* notes, in its opening, that more people worldwide are working themselves out of poverty than ever before, although disparities are increasing and the number of poor is still staggering. How do people work themselves out of poverty? Political representation at national and local level, empowerment, the informal sector, financial services for the poor, and access to resources, information and networks can all play crucial roles in the process of leaving poverty behind – as much as education, and national investment in health services and improved living conditions and social welfare benefits. In order to more completely understand the processes that lead, or do not lead to prosperity a more holistic view of poor peoples' lives and limitations is necessary.

2. Face to Face: Voices of the Poor

Many official documents tend to treat the complex issue of poverty as a statistical or a numerical problem on an aggregated level. Most documents on poverty provide little information or analysis of the complexities and multiple dimensions of poverty. This has indeed been the case with the official documents focused on poverty in Macedonia. Dividing poverty aspects into conventional sectors as education, health, employment, etc., provides the reader with rather shallow knowledge concerning how different individuals and households understand the process of poverty, and what the real world looks like from the individual perspective. How do poor people, individuals and households, understand poverty? How do they view the surrounding society and communities, and how do they try to cope with and make use of the very meagre resources available in their daily lives? How do they themselves understand the processes and complex social and economic environment that contribute to poverty?

This modest participatory poverty assessment is an attempt to provide a more holistic view of poverty in Macedonia as understood and experienced by a number of individuals and families. The case studies are intended to reflect major concerns and opportunities, as identified by the individuals and families interviewed. They are intended to shed some light on how poor families and individual themselves understand abstract expressions like poverty, empowerment and living conditions, and how these concepts form the individual's world-view and understanding of his or her livelihood. As these case studies indicate, material poverty cannot be separated from emotional stress, health, dignity or cultural wellbeing. Social and psychological factors are intimately connected to individuals and families, and the opportunities they perceive to improve their lives.

The identification and selection procedure of the families and individuals interviewed in this study is based on the assumption that women and men are exposed to poverty in different ways, that age is a major factor in dealing with and experiencing poverty, that poverty and wealth are experienced differently by families and individuals living in rural and urban areas and that ethnic affiliations may provide different contexts for dealing with, and experiencing poverty. Because of its limited scope, the assessment can only provide an indication as to how different individuals and families in a variety of social contexts understand poverty. The text is hopefully a reasonable representation of the expressions and ambitions of those interviewed, and those with whom I managed to stay

for a limited time. All interviews were carried out through interpreters. The actual fieldwork for the assessment was completed during the period 1-6 November, 2004. To a large degree the design of the assessment relied on close friends and relatives of at least two of the interpreters that worked with me. Two interpreters, one man and one woman, always participated in each interview. In the interviews conducted in Debar with the Albanian speaking family members, a female interpreter who was well acquainted with the family became the head interpreter. All interviews were conducted in the houses of the interviewees.

Three major foci/communities have been selected for this poverty assessment. The first is poor families in a suburb of Skopje, the capital of Macedonia. The second focus is a small village located in what is considered to be a relatively representative area of rural Macedonia. The third focus is the Albanian speaking community, represented by a number of family members in Debar, a small town close to the Albanian boarder, an area that is dominated by Albanian speaking people.

Case studies of this nature may, for obvious reasons, leave out a number of issues; and may also emphasize aspects that could at least superficially be regarded as of less importance to the reader. I have tried, however, to document what the individuals and families themselves feel is important. I judged some information as so personal or delicate that I did not include it in the documentation, and the names in the case studies have been changed. But in some cases, families or individuals insisted that their names should be included in the report, and in those cases I felt that I should honour their expectations.

2.1. Ishmael in a Skopje Suburb

Ishmael, his wife, three daughters and his 17 year old son are living in a Skopje suburb regarded as one of the more impoverished parts of town. Ishmael belongs to the rather small group of Macedonian Muslims, but is anxious to point out that he belongs to the Macedonian community, even if he is a Muslim and regarded by others as very poor. He lives in a small compound together with his two brothers. The three brothers inherited their father's house, and live in separate sections of the compound. They say that they have serious problems in their relations with each other; and they do not work together or help each other. Because of poverty, they say, they have insufficient resources to help each other and must first of all each take care of their own families. The three brothers are fortunate, however, because they own a bit of land. Ismael's property includes his backyard of some 3,000 square metres, and he has three other small pieces of land relatively close to his house. His wife does not own any land, and he is the legal owner of the house and properties.

His wife has never been employed or worked outside the home. She has very rarely left the house since she married, and for many years she has never left the neighbourhood. She often receives information about what is happening in the community or in Macedonia from Ishmael's brothers' wives. Sometimes the information is not reliable, but she is not interested in listening to the news on television or radio. She is busy working in the field and in the house all year around. She simply does not have time to leave the house. Gardening and housekeeping occupy her time. As the family is very short of money she is now "forced" to buy flour in order to make her own bread, the basic staple food in the family. "Ten years ago everybody, even the poorest, could buy bread from the shops. Today there is no one in the neighbourhood that is buying bread," she says.

Ishmael's family lives in an old and rather dilapidated house with two small rooms, one of which functions as a kitchen. The living room has an old television set, a stereo, a large wall-to-wall carpet and a nice sofa. Ishmael carries a mobile telephone in his belt, and on the surface of things, the family appears fairly affluent. However, he "found" the mobile phone somewhere and it has never functioned, and all the other assets in the house were purchased between ten and fifteen years ago, when his family and all his neighbours had sufficient money to buy goods that today are considered luxury goods, although they used to be considered a normal part of household equipment. The television and stereo do not work any longer, and he is ashamed to receive guests because he cannot provide them with coffee; the family only has enough money to provide tea for visitors.

Like all of his neighbours, Ishmael is unemployed. During twenty years he worked as a temporary worker for a large bread producing factory. But because his employment was temporary, the factory never paid social insurance for him and his family. The only temporary job he has been able to secure this year was a job at a warehouse for a total of one month. But this employment did not allow him to receive the official social insurance, and at the moment he is very concerned about his and his wife's health. His wife suffers from a rheumatic disorder but the family does not have sufficient money to see a doctor. The doctor's fee is considered far too expensive for their meagre resources.

His two youngest daughters are still in primary school, but his eldest daughter had to leave school because of the high cost of books and decent clothing. She is assisting her mother in housework and gardening. To his and his wife's great disappointment they could not afford to keep their son, the oldest child, in the training school for mechanics. One of the girls fell ill and had to see a doctor regularly. The treatment was so costly, some 3,000 dinar (*sixty dinar equal approximately one Euro*), that he had to choose between providing school opportunities for the boy or the daughter's health. The main concern for the family now is that they do not have sufficient money to buy identity cards for the oldest daughter and the son. Without an identity card it is impossible to get even temporary employment.

Ishmael is still fortunate, compared to many of his neighbours. He has his land, and he and his family can at least get sufficient food on the table. However, he "sometimes curses the fact that he has land". The soil is poor and he has no money to buy fertiliser and pesticide, so the harvests are very meagre. However, the municipality is aware that he has land and therefore he is not entitled to any social benefits. The family estimates that without the land they would be entitled to receive some 3,000 dinar a month in the form of social benefits from the municipality. It is a small sum, but they consider it much better than the meagre crops that they are able to produce from their land.

The chances of getting even a temporary job are becoming increasingly slim. Ishmael feels that his and his family's very existence is threatened. If the authorities disconnect the electricity to his house, and if the local authorities claim the taxes for his land, which he estimates at some 3,000 dinar per year, he simply would not know what to do. Perhaps he might sell a part of his land in order to be able to pay the taxes.

His wife and oldest daughter both suffer from serious depressions, and both feel that life has become so difficult that they really do not know how they will survive as a family. Ishmael and his wife emphasize that the economic poverty they experience is most difficult for the children. They are ashamed of their poverty, "how can they feel any pride" when

we cannot afford to keep them in school, to give them proper clothes, or to feed them decent food.

Ishmael's big ambition is to become what he calls "normal"! Normal means having a job and a secure income, being able to send his children to school and to live a decent life. Ishmael feels that it is the duty of the state or the municipality to provide sufficient means for all impoverished families, like they did before. "Before the changes", he says, "ten – fifteen years ago, we had employment and we had money. Now the state has abandoned us." He is very bitter. Three years ago became a member of the Social Democratic Party, and thought that once he was a member, the Party would help him in some way since it was in power. Now he is very disappointed, as no assistance or job opportunities have resulted from his membership. He was very active during election, trying to recruit new members, but received nothing for that. He is very proud of his membership card, but feels that neither the Party nor the state has any real interest in helping him and his family.

There are only two organisations active in the neighbourhood that provide the family with some assistance. One is the Muslim congregation and the local Imam that provide the poor with meat three times a year. The second organisation is a local NGO that provides the poor with second-hand clothes once or twice a year. Ishmael claims that the relationship between friends, relatives and neighbours is becoming increasingly tense as a result of their impoverishment. People simply do not have the sufficient means to assist others than those who are members of their own family.

He describes his life as "dark," and Ishmael is convinced that the future looks even gloomier. He identifies two possible opportunities for improving his situation. The first would be to find more permanent employment. Then he could save money to buy some simple irrigation equipment for his land and improve his production of vegetables and pulses. Perhaps he would be able to sell some surplus at the local market. The second opportunity is to do what a number of his neighbours have been doing or trying to do: leave Macedonia and become a "Gastarbeiter" in Europe. In this way, Ishmael feels, he would be able to earn enough money to organise his irrigation system, pay the bills for his wife and daughter's medical treatment, and "recapture" his pride as the head of a "normal" family.

2.2 Three Strong Women in a Skopje Neighbourhood

Dusanka, Danitsa and Letka are three married women in their late thirties. They are neighbours and they all live in a Skopje suburb that used to be considered a "normal" working-class suburb some ten to fifteen years ago, but today is considered by many as a relatively poor area because of increased unemployment. All three women live together with their families in small houses, and each house consists of one-room that also functions as a kitchen. Each house also has a small garden of some 700-800 square metres.

All the three women have previously been employed, either in temporary or permanent jobs. Dusanka and Letka have both worked as cleaners and Danitsa as a cook. Today, they believe that there are no opportunities for women with their experience and education to get employment. For the last six years none of them have had any temporary jobs. There are simply no employment opportunities available.

All their children, two, three and two respectively, attend elementary school and one of their main concerns is to provide decent clothes, school

books and notebook for their children. Because all three families are defined as “poor” by the municipality and school authorities, the children inherit old books from the school. Two of the families, Letka and Danitsa, also receive second-hand clothes free of charge from a local NGO.

However, Dusanka is considered more fortunate than her friends and does not receive any second hand clothes because her husband, a mechanic, has been able to secure at least some temporary jobs helping out at a nearby mechanical workshop. Dusanka is considered to be an industrious person. She has invested some of his income in two pigs and a number of chickens and is able to provide her family with sufficient meat and protein. The other two, Danitsa and Letka, complain that it is difficult for them to buy meat because of the limited money available. All three emphasize, with considerable pride, that they receive all the money that the men manage to earn and that they are the ones that make the decisions concerning what should be purchased for the household. They point out that it is the tradition in many Macedonian families that the husbands hand over their earnings to their wives. The three women are happy that this is still the case in their families, despite their poverty. “It shows that we are still normal families.”

Dusanka, Danitsa and Letka all emphasise that even if they could manage to get a temporary job it is very uncertain whether they would actually be paid for their work. Several of their neighbours, including their husbands, have been working on a temporary basis in construction work, hauling firewood, roadworks, etc. But they have not been paid for the jobs. For example, when Danitsa was laid off as a cook, the company owed her 60,000 dinar, a very considerable amount of money. Instead of being properly paid she was offered bricks instead of money, possibly because the factory had a surplus of bricks at that period of time. When she refused to accept the bricks she received no compensation for her salary claim. They all agree that this is a recurrent phenomenon, and that people taking temporary jobs in the informal market very often do not get paid for their work.

The three ladies regard themselves as fortunate in the sense that their husbands are “serious” and do their best to take care of their families. Many of the men of families in the immediate neighbourhood have started to drink heavily and have become alcoholics. Once these men receive money they spend it on rakia, and many women and children in the neighbourhood suffer badly.. Among the immediate neighbours of the three ladies, no less than four women have divorced their husbands because of drinking, and all three have close relatives who have also experienced divorces for the same reason. Most of the women are forced take the children and move to their parents’ house. The house and the land are “always” the property of the husbands/men and very often they refuse to share the property with their divorced wives, or delay doing so. For divorced women with children the social and economic situation is extremely precarious, and these families often become dependent on social welfare and/or their parents.

The social welfare paid through their municipality varies considerably. Letka and her family are living on, and totally dependant on social welfare for their livelihood. According to her, the highest amount of social welfare paid by this municipality is 3,500 dinar per month. It is considered impossible to survive on such a small amount, so each family must find supplementary incomes. Because of the small sums they earn/ receive, the three women emphasizes that it is of utmost importance that the family has a proper government health insurance. All three women

are proud of their husbands as they have paid for the insurance despite their meagre incomes. With the health insurance each medical consultation for an adult costs 200 dinar, but without the health insurance each consultation cost approximately 500 dinar. Two of the families have children with some form of nervous disorder, and it would be impossible for them to provide consultation and medication for their children without the health insurance.

All three women cultivate vegetables in their gardens. They harvest the vegetables in October/November and then pickle and preserve them for the winter. Dusanka grows potatoes in her garden and that crop is reserved for her two pigs, one of which will be slaughtered in November for the winter. She will sell the second pig. Danitsa is cultivating flowers in part of her garden and sells them at the local market. None of them can afford to buy any fertiliser or pesticide, so they claim that their harvest is very poor despite all their hard work.

Dusanka's and Danitsa's husbands both own a house and small pieces of land in their villages of origin. Despite their difficult economic situation in the city, they see no opportunities in returning to their original villages. The village can neither provide schooling nor basic services. The little land they own, some half hectare, is of a very poor quality and cannot be used for farming. They both say, "we are not interested in farming, but because we are so poor we have become farmers anyway – we have no money so we cannot live a normal life."

The three women point out that women work harder than men do, particularly in those families that are poor. Dusanka, Danitsa and Letka barely have time to leave their houses. They have been discussing whether they should join the Women's Association, but the head office of the association is located in the central part of Skopje and it is too far for them to go there. They feel that their hard work leaves them with no time to be members of any association or political party. However, women neighbours meet now and then with their friends to discuss how to solve problems in their families. "We discuss, and after discussing it is like a stone is leaving the heart and we remain good friends."

While their husbands are looking for jobs in town, the women's main concerns are about their children. Without a good education, there is no hope for the future. "We do not allow our children to go into town. They have too many problems in town with alcohol and smoking. Many children are using drugs, particularly marijuana, and we are afraid that our children will start with this too."

"While our men are dreaming of getting a job abroad, perhaps in Germany, we work hard for our families...it is difficult to plan for the future. The men in the family may be lucky to find a job for a day or two. If they find a job they must accept that job whatever it may be. It is often hard work for twelve hours a day, and the pay is low. Previously there were labour unions that prevented this form of exploitation, but today they do not provide any assistance, particularly for temporary workers. Going abroad may be the only solution for the future."

2.3. The Four Girls

Dijana, Ivana, Irena and Madica have long been close friends and live in the same neighbourhood. The girls are between fourteen and sixteen years old, and two of them are about to finish elementary school while the other two have just started their high school education. They all belong to what they call "poor" families in this rather impoverished neighbourhood located about ten kilometers from the centre of Skopje.

Like most of the grownups in this neighbourhood, their parents are unemployed. Their mothers are housewives and their fathers are looking for temporary employment. Although their fathers are away from the house most of the time looking for employment it is very rare that they find an opportunity to work. The peak season for their fathers' temporary jobs is between June and October. When the winter is coming there are very few jobs available, and then the whole family economy is in jeopardy.

This is particularly problematic for the two girls in high school, as they both have to pay school fees even though these are very low (1,200 dinar per year), and they have to pay for the bus transport from their home to school. The transport is considered a real burden, costing no less than 1,000 dinar per month, and it has happened that one of families could not afford to pay the transport and the girl had to stay at home for a month. Because they are poor families the state/municipality subsidises their schoolbooks, and they often receive old books from their schools.

A source of great frustration for all four girls is that the schools do not provide any food, and they have to bring money with them to buy food for lunch. They reckon that they need ten to fifteen dinar a day to be able to buy food for their lunch, and quite often the families do not have sufficient money to send with them. However, sometimes the girls like to save their lunch money in order to buy "some luxury", a cheap bracelet or an amulet, for example.

The four girls are extremely proud of their parents who encourage and support them for going to school despite their lack of money, and they all feel that education is the only way out of poverty for them. However, they all share the difficulty of securing a small "private place" where they can do their homework and study. Since the four families live in one-room houses with four to six people living in each house, there are few possibilities for doing homework. One of their dreams is to have their own room, where they can have their own things and do their work in a quiet place.

"We want to make our families normal." Even if they consider it is too early to think about their future careers, they would like to study to become a teacher, a secretary and a lawyer, and they feel that they have an advantage over the boys, whom they believe are not thinking about the future the way the girls are. They feel that their future career is really important, and in order to become "professional," in Eastern Europe an education is necessary. "If you have an education from abroad you can do anything." And the most important is to know and be excellent in English; knowing English provides you opportunities to work with foreign countries, and make a lot of money.

All the girls are very proud to be able to go to school and receive an education. But in school they feel ashamed of their poverty, mainly because they do not have money to buy new clothes. Once a year their mothers accompany two of the girls to a nearby clothing shop where they can buy cheap clothing. In this shop a pair of jeans may cost 500 dinar, while in a more up-market shop a better pair of jeans would probably cost 3,000 dinar, far out of the economic reach of their families. The other two girls sometimes go to the local Red Cross Office where there sometimes is a distribution point for second hand clothes. This shopping is free of charge. They have never heard of a second hand clothes market, neither in this neighbourhood nor in Skopje.

The girls dream of a future when they can buy new and more fashionable clothes, like those they see in the television soap operas that most

of their friends follow every day. This is the soap opera from Argentina called “The Zebelde Way”, where both they and their parents feel that teenage problems are discussed “in a good way”. Those friends who do not have television sets are regarded as extremely poor. These more unfortunate friends sometimes come to visit the girls and their families and watch the soap opera and enjoy the better food that is being served in those families. In the immediate neighbourhood there are five girls their age who do not have a television set at home. They are regarded as very poor and often receive clothes from the more fortunate families and friends nearby.

The girls all have grandparents living in villages. Every summer they travel to these small villages and spend some time there, helping their grandparents in the household, in the same way that they normally help out in their own home. They feel that they would never be able to settle and live in a village. The schools are poor, there are no jobs available, there is nothing to buy or do in the village, and “people have to work all the time”.

The neighbourhood where the girls live is highly homogeneous in terms of ethnical affiliation. There are a few Turkish families living in the neighbourhood and the girls regard them as very much the same as “ordinary” Macedonians. They are close friends with some of the girls from Turkish families, and feel that one’s ethnic origins are an issue that is not discussed in their neighbourhood because there is no need for that. However, the schools that the girls attend are much more heterogeneous. There are a number of girls and boys from Albanian speaking Macedonian families that attend these schools. Some of the ethnic constraints in Macedonia have become very obvious in these schools. According to the girls, and they all feel strongly supported by their families, the Albanian-speaking families and people are “dangerous”. “We have always had bad relations with the Albanians, perhaps because of the politicians?” The girls feel that the Albanians are richer than the Macedonians, more violent, and that many of the families are involved in illegal business. The stereotypes have already been strongly developed, and the girls say that if they could, they would change schools and enrol in a school where there are no Albanian students. None of the girls have ever been to an Albanian neighbourhood or known an Albanian family, but they are still very suspicious of both their Albanian fellow students in the school as well as the Albanian-speaking communities living in Macedonia in general.

2.4 Kampturov, the Roma Family

The Kampturov family lives in a neighbourhood called Shutka, for many Macedonians an infamous suburb dominated by Roma inhabitants but also populated by Albanian-speaking families as well as families of Macedonian origin. The suburb is widely known for its Roma dominance, its small and sometimes dilapidated houses, maze of small and narrow roads and famous market place along the main road – or rather market places – where you can buy anything from mobile telephones to clothes, toys, etc. The area is conspicuously different from other suburbs in Skopje. It is lively, busy and poor.

Both husband and wife are around 40 years old, born and raised in this area; and they live together with three of their children in a one-room house close to the centre of Shutka. Two daughters are grown up and married. One has settled in another area of Skopje and the other has moved to Milan, Italy. The three children remaining in the house are all attending school close to the Kampturov residence.

During the big earthquake in Skopje in the early sixties the old house belonging to the family was completely destroyed. The state provided the family with a barrack, a temporary shelter that was later modified into a proper house by the family. The land and the house belong to the husband, the undisputed head of the family, but there are some uncertainties as to the rightful and formal ownership of the land and the house, a situation that may result in legal difficulties in the future.

The Kampturov house is small but very neat and well furnished. The family has bought two small sofas, and a couple of chairs and a table, they also possess a large television set, a freezer and a fridge, and a stereo – all bought second-hand. Most of these assets were purchased with money that Mr Kampturov earned in Italy. Between 1998 and 2001 he managed to illegally enter Italy three times. He stayed with friends and relatives and earned some money through begging and saved that money. He is very proud of his work as a beggar. His and his friends' work was well-organised and he claims that he managed to save some 1,000 Euro from begging during this period. Today, he claims, it is impossible for him to enter Italy. In Macedonia or in other parts of Eastern Europe it is virtually impossible to make a living as a beggar.

Despite the relative affluent interior of the house the Kampturov family experience very difficult times today and quite often they find that they cannot put sufficient food on the table. Meat is served to the family only when Mr. Kampturov has managed to secure a temporary job. During the last three months he has managed to work ten days at a warehouse as a temporary worker, earning 500 dinar a day. Because of their limited income the family has managed to secure social welfare from the municipality, and are now receiving 2,500 dinar every month.

The Kampturov family is regarded by many of their neighbours as a “good” family. It is a stable family that encourages their children to go to school; the husband is active in a political party and is highly regarded and appreciated by the neighbours. When he was younger the husband belonged to the Roma Folk Music Association, but in 1992 he resigned from the Association and became an active member of the Social Democratic Party. Mr Kampturov felt that the changes that took place during this period could actually result in some improvements for the Roma communities. He is still an active member and is very proud that the Party is a source of major influence in the current Macedonian government. A few families in the neighbourhood are members of other political parties, mainly those parties that particularly focus on Roma difficulties and living conditions. The PCCRM (roughly translated to Party for Total Emancipation of Roma People in Macedonia) is said by the Kampturov family to be the first Roma political party, established in 1991. There are also other Roma political parties drawing members from this neighbourhood. However, despite his political affiliation Mr Kampturov feels that his influence in the society is very limited. “We, the Roma, are the lowest of everybody in the society – no one likes us.”

He regularly goes to the Institute for the Unemployed to look for temporary jobs or social welfare. There are always queues and a lot of people around the Institute. The Roma feel that they are always being placed last in the queue, are always very poorly treated, and many men from the Roma communities have stopped going to the Institute to look for temporary jobs. However, the Kampturov family feels that the neighbourhood has changed for the better since 1996. This was the time when the Shutka became classified as a municipality in its own right. Since then the municipality has employed Roma speaking people within its admin-

istration. "At least they understand us and our problems, and we can talk to them and they listen to us."

Nobody in any of the approximately 25 families living in the street where the Kampturov's house is located has a permanent job. Everybody, both men and women, young and old, is looking for a temporary job, but few are successful. Some members of eight of the families living in the street go to the centre of Skopje every morning to look for garbage and food to collect, or something of value in the city garbage containers. Only the older men and women in the families work in that type of garbage collection. There is no particular system in the garbage collection, but people agree in advance on which areas they are going to.

Not only members of the Roma group collect garbage informally; this is also done by poor members of the Albanian communities. However, the relationships between the Roma speaking and the Albanian speaking communities and individuals are often very tense. The Romas, according to the Kampturov family, feel that the Albanians are very aggressive and have been very successful in attracting international attention to their situation, much more successful than the Romas. Many of the Romas feel that the Albanians are extremely aggressive in their fight to establish a bilingual Macedonia and in promoting themselves. (This conflict surfaced during the time of the interviews in particular because of referendum concerning local government boundaries. The main issue, it was explained by the Kampturov family, was not so much concerning the actual boundaries but the possibility that the Albanian language could be established as a second official language in those municipalities where more than 20 percent of the residents are Albanian-speaking.)

A number of men in the neighbourhood volunteered to join the Macedonian army during the war between Macedonian and Albanian speaking communities in 2001, and Mr Kampturov himself was one of the volunteers. His negative views on the Albanian population have partly emerged as a result of the conflict around some of the local schools in the area. The Albanian-speaking communities in Shutka, he claimed, had aggressively introduced Albanian as a second language in some of the schools and in one school they had introduced Albanian as the main language. He feared that the Roma-Macedonian students would be excluded from that school.

Kampturov himself and his family are Muslims, but they emphasize that their ethnic belonging is much more important than having the same religion. None of the Muslim families in the neighbourhood attend the mosque regularly. In fact, a number of Roma Muslims have converted to the Seven-Days Adventist church. One of their churches has been established in the Shutka neighbourhood and the congregation consists of some 17 families. In fact, Kampturov's brother has converted to this church and the Kampturov family express the feeling that the conversion may not be a bad idea. The fact that the church occasionally provides food and clothing for those in need is one of its attractive features.

Mrs Kampturov claims that it is often easier for Roma women to find work than for the men. At least a few women in the neighbourhood are working on a temporary basis, often as cleaning ladies employed by better-off Macedonian families in Skopje. Cleaning ladies are often paid about 600 to 700 dinar per day, plus the cost of a ticket for the bus transport to work. Mrs Kampturov claims that in the Roma families in the neighbourhood the woman often takes care of both her own and her husband's income, and it is not uncommon that the men ask the women for money when they want to go out to meet friends. Mrs Kampturov knows

that the many domestic quarrels and physical fights between wives and husbands in the neighbourhood occur mainly in those families where the men do not hand over their income to the women. These men drink too much and spend their meagre earnings on alcohol rather than providing money for food to the family. She claims that wife beating is common in the neighbourhood, and is often the result of a lack of money or food in the family. Sometimes the Kampturov family has called the police in order to intervene in fights between husbands and wives. However, they claim that “when the police arrive the wives are always defending their husbands,” – and very little is done to punish or correct the husbands.

There are, however, some organisations that particularly work with Roma women. One of the best-known is called ESMA. Mrs Kampturov used to be an active member in this organization. It mainly functioned as a meeting place where women could discuss domestic problems, health, and how to protect their daughters. Sometimes the participants received gifts of meat from the more affluent members. Another organisation active in the neighbourhood is Caritas. She used to participate in their meetings. These days she has little time to attend their meetings, and as she has developed serious asthma during the last few years and the members of the group smoke a lot, she cannot attend their meetings any longer.

Unlike other women in the neighbourhood, Mrs Kampturov does not look for jobs outside the house any longer. She wishes she could find a good job, but because of her asthma and a nervous disorder she has developed she does not have the strength to do any manual labour outside the house. The Kampturov family feels that they are particularly poorly treated by the state as the medicines that are needed for Mrs Kampturov are not subsidised by the state, contrary to the medicines appearing on the “positive” list. The medication on the “negative list” is regarded as extremely expensive and the family simply does not have enough money to buy the prescribed medication.. They also feel that the doctors in the neighbourhood are “corrupt” because they will always ask for extra money, over and above the stipulated official and regulated amount. The family has been forced to cancel a recommended surgery for Mrs Kampturov twice because they simply do not have sufficient money for the surgery.

Because they have “no friends” at the hospital they feel that they are always poorly treated and have to pay higher amounts than others do. Mrs Kampturov’s brother managed to secure a micro-credit of 500 Euro from an NGO, Orisonti, and used it to buy and sell textiles in the market. Unfortunately the profit margins were very low and did not suffice to pay for the surgery needed. They feel that they share this unfortunate fate with many Roma families, and that the only solution to all their problems is to leave Macedonia and establish themselves in Western Europe. But they also know that today, this is not a realistic alternative. “We just don’t know what to do in the future!”

2.5. Albanian-speaking Families in Debar

Debar is a small town with some 20,000 inhabitants located close to the Albanian border. Inhabitants claim that some eighty percent of the population is of Albanian-speaking origin, a few are Macedonian Muslims and the remaining are what they call orthodox Macedonians. For the visitor, the town looks rather affluent. A clean and well swept city centre, a considerable number of shops and a surprisingly large number of goldsmiths give the town an affluent character. All the Albanian-speaking

families are said to be Muslims and the ongoing Ramadan is taken very seriously by a large number of families. Close to the city centre there are a good number of large and newly built houses that are empty. Debar officials claim that nearly half of the Albanian-speaking population has permanently emigrated to the United States.. Communication between those living in Debar and relatives and friends living in the United States appears to be very intense. In fact, during holidays and in the summer the town almost doubles in population. Remittances are said to play a major role in supporting a number of the Albanian-speaking families in Debar. But as we shall see, having relatives in the United States does not necessarily mean that a family can avoid poverty and economic problems.

A number of families living in Debar are regarded by many community members as being very poor. One of these families is the Feti family. They used to live in a village about four to five kilometers away, just at the Albanian border. The village was a lively and good place to live,, but with increasing political uncertainties and thieves crossing the border from Albania to steal in Macedonia, the Feti family and all the other families in the village decided to leave and to settle in Debar town. The village, together with most of the border villages, had become a dangerous place to live, and many families are reported to have lost part of their property to the thieves.

The Feti family had little money or property, and took their three cows, their horse and cart, and some basic furniture and moved into Debar, staying with friends temporarily. With help from the Macedonian government and relatives living and working in the United States they managed to buy a small two-room house in Debar. Their move to Debar was, however, only the beginning of their plight.

The two sons did not manage to find employment, not even temporary jobs; but the husband was offered a job as a cleaner and manual worker for the Department of Agriculture. He became increasingly ill, however, and became more and more incapacitated. When his health deteriorated further the local doctors advised that surgery was necessary. The family had no money to pay for the surgery, and their relatives in the US did not help at that particular time. Mr Feti died two years ago, and the family claims that this was mainly due to the lack of money for adequate medication and treatment.

Mrs Feti, today in her seventies, lives in the house together with her two sons, their wives, and their seven children. She is very fragile; and has been diagnosed as having serious nervous problems. She feels that the forced move to the town has been a disaster for the family, and wants to go back to the village; and at least one of the sons also wants to return. But they do not dare. Living in the village is considered too dangerous. Some of the families from the village, including the Feti family, return regularly to cultivate some of their land or to collect firewood, but most former inhabitants have simply abandoned their land and houses.

Mrs Feti inherited the house in town from her husband when he died. She also inherited the two cows that he owned, as well as the horse and the wagon. She may be the formal owner of these assets, but it is the older son who makes the decisions regarding the use of the cows, the horse and the house. Both daughters-in-law agree that they have no influence in running the household economy. They may be able to contribute advice concerning the upbringing of the children, but the older brother is the one who makes decisions for the household on all important matters. In the Feti family, this position is further emphasised by the fact that the older brother is the only member of the family who

has found at least temporary employment. He is employed as a street cleaner by the municipality. This work is very irregular, however. He is paid 7,000 dinar a month, but during this year he has only been able to work for three months.

The income from street cleaning complements the 3,000 dinar pension that Mrs Feti receives every month. A considerable part of the income has to be allocated for electricity and water. Approximately 2,000 dinar has to be paid monthly for these services. If it wasn't for the two milk cows kept in the stables, the Feti family would face great difficulties in feeding themselves. The family agrees that without the cows, particularly the children would be undernourished. The family does not have enough money to buy meat on a regular basis. Meat is a very rare commodity and is sometimes given to them by the neighbours. It is one month since the family had any meat on their table.

Milk cows are a very attractive asset, so attractive that a few years ago their three cows were actually stolen. This was a disaster for the family and they managed to contact their friends in the United States and no less than 25 families in the US pooled resources and contributed USD 50 each to send the Fetis USD 1,000, just enough to buy two good new milk cows. For the Feti family, the fundamental safety net is not located within Macedonia but in the United States, where they feel the generosity of friends and relatives will at least protect them from starvation.

Much of the work the Feti family members do is focused on getting sufficient food for the day. But important work for their future livelihood is also carried out in farming. The youngest son grows alfalfa on a piece of land in the old village. Without this feed, the cows would not be able to milk sufficiently for the need of the family. The two daughters-in-law work in the small garden outside the house and grow cabbage, beans and pepper. They do not have enough land to grow potatoes, so a few neighbours assist them occasionally by providing them with potatoes. They have to buy wheat flour, oil and salt in order to make their bread.

During the last six years they have not been able to buy any new clothes. They receive second-hand clothes from their friends and neighbours. The family members feel very depressed about receiving these second-hand clothes, however, partly because they are old and sometimes in very poor condition, and partly because they are not clean and ironed, which they feel is a way for the neighbours to confirm the poverty and low status of their family.

The little money they earn does not allow them to pay social insurance for the members of the family. However, many of the doctors in Debar realize that the family is so poor that they simply have no money to pay for medical care. "Now we see them without paying any money – the doctors know that we are very poor". Medicines have to be purchased, however, and the economic situation of the family is so constrained that buying medicine is impossible. This situation is particularly negative for one of the daughters in law, who suffers from a serious nervous disease.

The family members agree that if something should happen to the older brother, the only source of income in the family apart from Mrs Feti's pension, it would be a disaster. They feel that they should be entitled to better social benefits from the municipality due to their precarious situation.. However, three years ago they were visited by some municipality representatives, and the unfortunate result of this visit was that the authorities decided to cancel any additional social benefit to the family. The Fetis are very angry about this, and feel that the authorities were spying, and that they were very negative towards the family. They ex-

press strong sentiments regarding the municipality authorities, accusing them of being “too closely tied to the state and the state does not understand and actively works against the interests of the Albanian-speaking people”.

In the same neighbourhood as the Feti family 29-year-old Lela lives with his family. Lela is the head of the family, and lives together with four single younger brothers, two younger sisters, and his newly wedded wife. They married only three weeks before the interview. She comes from a village nearby, but they had only known each other for only three days before the marriage, which was arranged by senior relatives to Lela and his wife.

He now looks forward to providing his young wife with the traditional golden ring and golden chain as a symbol of their marriage. He cannot afford to buy the ring and the bracelet by himself, so he is waiting for his older sister, who lives in Switzerland, to come to Debar on her holiday and hopes that she will bring enough money with her to buy the precious symbols. This sister and her family are considered to be very generous. Without her regular contributions in cash and in kind, the Lela family would be extremely impoverished. Today they have problems in finding money to buy food as well as pay the electricity and water bills, despite the fact that this sister sent 200 Euro to the family this year. During the last few years she has managed to provide the family with a television, a stereo, a washing machine, a vacuum cleaner, a fridge and a freezer, an electric stove and even a satellite receiver.

This apparent material affluence is, however, strongly contradicted by the problems the family is facing in earning sufficient money to keep the household afloat. Lela is in a good mood, however. He has managed to secure different temporary jobs during the last four months. He has been working for a cousin of his, loading wood and doing construction work, and he has also been paid the agreed salary of 600 dinar a day, which is considered to be a reasonable payment for a temporary job. He is satisfied because he has actually been paid his salary, contrary to many of his friends who have worked on temporary jobs. Working for a cousin and a close relative is considered safer than working for others – “relatives help each other”.

Lela expects that one of his cousins may even be able to offer him temporary jobs during the winter period. The winter is normally the time when such jobs are very hard to find and when most poor families suffer from serious economic hardship, sometimes even from a lack of food. Today, however, there is food on the table for Lela’s family, and he has also been able to pay some of his debts to the Electricity Company. Paying the electricity bills is a constant concern for all families in the neighbourhood. For Lela’s family the bill is some 2,500 dinar per month during the winter period. Lela feels that the poor families are unfairly treated by the Electricity Company, as he belongs to the category of families that cannot afford to buy a new electricity metre. With a new metre the Lela family would be able to use the low tariff electricity in the morning and in the afternoon, contrary to the old metres where you cannot distinguish between low and high tariffs and consequently always have to pay the high tariff. He and his neighbours do not know what a new electricity metre may cost but it is regarded as extremely expensive, perhaps some 400 Euro. They are very bitter that the poor people have to pay higher tariffs than the wealthier families in Debar.

Lela and his brothers go regularly to the local Mosque to pray; at least every Friday. He wants to go and pray every day but he does not have

the time. The Imam of the mosque that he regularly visits is regarded as a very dynamic person. Sometimes he receives money from a congregation in the United States that is very close to his mosque, and divides this money among the neediest in the congregation. Lela and his family have never received any money because the Imam considers that they are not among the neediest families of the congregation.

Some years ago Lela tried to gain access to jobs for his brothers and himself by joining one of the Albanian-speaking political parties in Debar. He was not really interested in politics, but thought that the membership might create new job opportunities for them. But it did not work out that way. “His” party is still a relatively small political party and he feels that it is only those who belong to the governing parties that are provided jobs through the municipality and its institutions. “You must have a friend in the municipality; otherwise you never get a job.” He blames the government for the precarious economic situation of the Albanians, because the government closed down all of the big factories in the area around Debar. He feels that “the Albanians are worst off – there is more unemployment among us than anywhere else”. And Lela feels that the government is strongly biased against the Albanians.

He wants to leave Macedonia and Debar and go to Europe or to United States, and has applied twice for a visa to the United States but been unsuccessful. Things are complicated for Lela; he is the oldest brother and has considerable social and economic responsibilities towards his younger brothers and sisters. His main concern, however, is his old mother who has been hospitalized for the last year. She suffers from serious neurological symptoms and it would be very difficult for him to leave the country when she is in the hospital. At the same time, he feels that if he worked abroad he would be able to provide her with the recommended medicines that he cannot afford to buy at the moment. Lela also feels that if he was able to work in the United States he would be able to provide money for his family in Debar and allow them to live “a normal life”.

2.6 The Gradište Village

Gradište village is not one of the poorest villages in Macedonia rural area. It is described as a rather average and typical village of the Macedonian countryside. It is located about 1 ½ hours drive from Skopje, and is not far from the town of Kumanovo. A narrow road leads from the main road up to the hilly area where the village is located. Most of the small houses in the village are made of stone or bricks. There are no natural centres in the village except for the two communal water taps that have long been there. All the houses are connected to the electricity grid and most of the houses are said to have telephones. A considerable number of the houses are empty, because their owners have moved to Kumanovo or Skopje to look for work. Of the 200 families owning houses in the village, more than one-third are said to have moved to the urban areas.

The families interviewed in the village all claim that Gradište is a very lively village during the summer, when the children and also grown-ups from the families that have moved to urban areas come back to the village to work in their fields, or just to take up residence in their village houses. During the rest of the year one mainly meets middle-aged or old people in the village. There are a few children remaining in the village; in fact, those interviewed claim that the children or young ones remaining are considered to be rather unfortunate, as their chances of getting employment outside the village is becoming increasingly difficult. Re-

maining in the village and having to rely on farming for a living is considered “an unfortunate destiny”. – “All the men in the village are looking for a job outside. It is only the old people, or the women and those men who cannot get even a temporary job that remain” – “Farming is something you do in order to survive, not because you want to do it.”

Krumislav has been living in Gradište all his life. He is a very active and energetic 72 year-old farmer living in a relatively well maintained two-room house with a big cellar. The house has both electricity and a telephone line. His younger son used to work in a state-owned factory which closed two years ago. Now, the son is helping his father in farming. The family owns a tractor that was purchased about fifteen years ago. In fact, there are no less than 35 tractors in the village, all of them ten to fifteen years old. Nobody is buying tractors today – “the people living here have no interest in or money to invest in agriculture.”

Krumislav belongs to a small group of farmers in the village who are actually selling the major part of their produce, mainly to buyers from the nearby market in Kumanovo town. Last year the family sold no less than 30 lambs. They also sold yellow cheese, some 500 kg, in Skopje. They were the only family that sold any wheat last season, some 5.5 tons, to a nearby miller.

Krumislav has a pension of some 3,500 dinar per month but he feels that the pension is not sufficient to live on. He takes care of the family sheep, brings them out to pasture, and does the slaughtering and the extra feeding. He is very proud of the cheese that his wife produces. Lately though, his wife has been very sick, complaining about stomach and heart pains. She is very weak and it is doubtful whether she will be able to produce any cheese this season. At the moment his youngest son is out “chasing” those people who bought lamb from Krumislav this season. The normal system is that the buyer will pay for the lamb two or three months after having received it, since most buyers do not have enough money to pay cash for the lambs. However, during the last years it has become increasingly difficult to actually collect payments, and the family has to spend considerable time just to collect their money.

According to Krumislav, this problem is symptomatic of the current situation in the village. “Today, it is very difficult to find a buyer who is honest and it is very difficult to actually get paid for your produce”. “For those in the village living off agriculture only, life is very hard.” Krumislav claims that fifteen years ago, the villagers owned about 5,000 sheep, according to the official agricultural census. He estimates that the total village herd may only include some 650 sheep today. The production of meat and cheese has gone down dramatically, mainly because those remaining in the village are not interested in, or do not have sufficient labour available to invest in more intensive farming or herding. In fact, the system of agricultural production has changed very little during the last 20 years, except that it has become less intensive. People are still growing wheat, barley, and corn on small patches of land. They keep less sheep than they used to, and only very few of the better-off farmers in the village are keeping milk cows. Only roughly 25 families in the village keep cows, which is very intensive work because they are kept inside stables during most of the year. Only one family has more than three milk cows, and they are considered exceptional. They are very ambitious and live entirely from farming. They have a tractor, no less than 8 cows, and have leased village land in order to produce sufficient fodder for their livestock.

2.7 Mira and her Family

Mira and her family are regarded as one of the poorer families in Gradište. However, she likes to point out there are some families in the village that are much poorer than they, and actually have to beg to get enough food to feed themselves. There are four or five families in the village that she considers very poor. The poverty these families are experiencing is the result of husbands drinking too much alcohol or because either the husband or the wife has become ill. There is no one actually starving in Gradište, but several families have difficulties obtaining enough food.

Mira, her husband and daughter are living in a small and very run-down two-room house together with her husband's parents. She married her husband ten years ago, and at that time he was working in road construction and had a good salary. Today he suffers from a nervous disorder and can only work a few days a week and receives a very small salary of 3,000 dinar a month. The employment is temporary, and she is very concerned about what may happen to her and the family if the husband cannot continue his employment. "We never speak about how to improve things – we only speak about how to get the money to last for this month."

Her husband's parents settled in the village about 40 years ago. They and five other families moved away from another village that was situated high in the mountains, a mountain village that had gradually been abandoned. The family does not have any land of its own, but they are able to rent 0.4 hectares from their neighbours, for which they pay 1,200 dinar per year. They mainly grow barley and wheat, and all their produce goes either for their own consumption or is used for the one pig and the few sheep they keep.

Their house is connected to the electricity grid and the electricity bills are mainly paid by the pension received by her husband's parents. This pension also pays for the medication her husband needs for his nervous disorder. This medicine is on "the negative list" which means that the family, which does not have any insurance, has to pay the full price, which amounts to some 2,000 dinar a month, draining the limited income of the family.

Mira reckons that there are several people with nervous disorder residing in the village. Many people are increasingly depressed because of their poor economic situation – the lack of job opportunities outside the village is regarded as a major contributor to these concerns. Ten to fifteen years ago most able-bodied men worked in different construction companies in Skopje or even abroad. Today there are only five families in the village where the husbands are working in the construction business. Four of them are actually working in Russia on road construction carried out by a Macedonian company.

Mira is fortunate because she has two brothers residing in Gradište. They own some land and one of them worked in Skopje for a period of time and invested his money in a tractor twelve years ago. He assists Mira's family by bringing their wheat to the miller, twelve kilometers away from the village. Both brothers also help tilling the fields rented by Mira's husband, but none of the brothers have enough means to assist them with cash.

Both of Mira's two brothers rely on farming; they stay together and have three milking cows together. The two brothers are among the eleven single men living in the village. Both brothers confirm that all the single women, and for that matter married women too, want to leave the village and marry in town and move away from the village. The hard

work, such as carrying the water from the communal water taps, the poor living conditions and lack of entertainment and of future economic prosperity make the single women leave the village. The fact that the school is considered very poor and is located at a distance from the village is also a contributing factor for families with children to leave the village.

However, Dragitsa, who is Mira's next door neighbour, feels that there are also other reasons for women to leave the village. "The women living in the village have nowhere to go. They stay with their husbands and parents and only rarely do they visit each other." There are no associations or clubs;

neither for the men nor for the women. Many people feel that they receive no information about what is happening outside the village. Many of them very rarely travel to Kumanovo town or read newspapers. The local Orthodox Church has become a main meeting place, particularly among the younger people. People go to the church in increasing numbers and pray for good health and economic prosperity.

Dragitsa mentions that particularly during the winter, when the village is very isolated, there are many conflicts boiling between husbands and wives and those staying in the same house. Many of the men regularly drink *rakia* during this period and it is not uncommon that quarrels between husbands and wives result in wife beating and sometimes also divorces. Those unfortunate women that are subject to wife beating live miserable lives. It is very rare that these women receive any form of support from their parents or relatives, and there are few parents that would accept that they move back into the parents' houses. There are few women who have the courage to actually carry out a separation from their husbands. The husbands are often the formal owners of both the house and the land, so the social and economic risks of going through a divorce are considerable.

2.8. Entrepreneurship in Gradište Village

Everything is not gloomy in Gradište. There are also some very positive changes taking place in the village, and a new form of entrepreneurship is emerging. Marijan, a successful businessman who lives with his family in the nearby Kumanovo town, has realised that there are actually opportunities for commercial farming in the Gradište area. Marijan was raised in Gradište and his parents were both Gradište villagers. His father died and his mother has remained in the village in the family house.

Marijan learned about the possibilities for breeding improved stocks of sheep from friends working at the Agriculture University in Skopje, and he decided that he would invest in this business. Through his contacts he managed to import a small herd of Awassi sheep from Israel, with the intention of building up a sizable herd in order to start selling frozen semen as well as initiating a campaign for local cross-breeds. He renovated his/his father's old house in Gradište, built a new stable and imported a number of Awassi sheep. He employed two people to herd the sheep and to milk them. He and his family bought small cooling equipment for the sheep milk, and started to process the milk into cheese. Today they provide milk samples to the state laboratory on a regular basis in Skopje and sell considerable quantities of cheese in Skopje.

The family's ambition is to increase the stock of Awassi sheep and to distribute frozen semen and embryos both within Macedonia and for export in nearby countries. Marijan buys feed from nearby farmers and has, at least in a small way, created hope for a better economic future among some of the inhabitants of the Gradište village.

3. How Can We Improve Our Understanding of Poverty? Some Possible Ways Forward

The case-studies presented above provide us with insights that allow us to identify possible guidelines regarding factors that may be included in an analysis that would improve our understanding of poverty and its complexities in a country like Macedonia, and perhaps also other areas and countries experiencing similar transitional processes. The Macedonian case studies, like the Ishmael family, suggest that the overall economic contraction experienced in Macedonia affects all aspects of life for the individual household, not least the emotional stress related to economic uncertainty and the expectations of the future.

The differences and similarities between members of different social belonging, between men and women or between members of different age groups, regarding how they experience poverty is amply demonstrated when the ambitions and lifestyle of the Three Strong Women are compared with the families living in the Gradiste village. Case studies of individuals and households can be a valuable instrument for policy makers when used as a complement to the more conventional statistical and aggregated approach that is customarily applied in collecting data on economic and social variables related to poverty. Sometimes disregarded as mere anecdotal evidence, the case-study approach can be of considerable use in contributing to a better understanding of differences and similarities in livelihoods, concerns and opportunities – as they are perceived by different groups in the social hierarchy labelled as poor.

Equally important contributions to our understanding of poverty are the attitudes and work practices of different members of the public institutions and organisations that deal directly with the poor population. The example of the Roma family forced to look for temporary employment in what they perceive as a hostile institutional environment that inhibits their economic opportunities indicates the importance of such knowledge. Such studies, or institutional assessments, are more difficult to conduct and are certainly more politically sensitive, than studies related to families and households. However, insight into the work and the institutional cultures of these organisations at different levels would greatly enhance our awareness of the positive and negative aspects of the mediators that act as interface between individuals and the state.

Poverty is experienced and understood very differently by different social categories. The considerable differences between for example the three women in Skopje, the Roma family and the Albanian speaking families in Debar indicates that a poverty assessment becomes rather

meaningless if different social and economic categories within the group that is considered poor are not clearly distinguished, and their variation illustrated. Differences and similarities in gender, age, location, ethnic affiliation and social and economic hierarchies must be given a prominent position in a poverty analysis if we are to appreciate the complexities of poverty and understand the dynamics of individuals and households and their relationship to the society at large.

Differences in division of labour as well as control and allocation of resources and money within households should constitute essential elements in a poverty assessment, as indicated for example by the Three Skopje residing Women that are in charge of their family budget contrary to the families interviewed in Debar. This information provides an improved understanding of decision-making, the distribution of power, and various sources of conflicts in different categories of households, and defines the parameters within which change is possible and households' strategies can be rethought and redefined. This information is of key importance for policymakers regarding both the provision and communication of information, training, education, and allocation other resources.

All the families interviewed, from Debar to Gradiste, emphasised that job opportunities, security in their homes, access to money, social interaction between families and spouses, variation in diets and consumption, etc. varied considerably between the different seasons during the year. Seasonal variations are of considerable importance in terms of livelihood, production and consumption. Aggregated information does not provide an adequate understanding of the dramatic seasonal changes experienced by different households and individuals. The extreme differences between winter and summer periods determines, like the men and women emphasised in both Skopje and the Gradiste village, the variations in movements to and from different locations, access to information, and social networking. The fact that seasonal changes are viewed differently by men and women, people of different ages and in different locations is a recurrent theme among all the families interviewed.

For the Roma family and all the other households interviewed in the urban areas of Skopje and Debar access to formal or informal employment plays a determinant role in providing incomes to the household. Access to, or anticipated access to, employment opportunities also influences how and why individuals initiate small business or trading enterprises and otherwise organise their livelihoods. A better understanding of the dynamics of the labour market for the poorer households, and how they themselves understand the intricacies and opportunities of this complex market are essential elements in an improved analysis of production and reproduction of poverty.

Almost all the poor households that participated in this assessment, whether the families in the Gradiste village or the Albanian speaking families residing in Debar, had family members that suffered from different nervous disorder. Health, emotional well-being and the social security of an individual or a household are intimately connected to the perception of available economic and social resources. Health is not an independent variable. It may be regarded as part of a process of social disempowerment where individuals experience a continuous and increasing lack of resources. This process of economic and social contraction, from what is perceived as a "normal" and acceptable life to an abnormal life, is highly complex and ought to be described in qualitative terms in an analysis focused on poverty.

Kampturov residing in Shutka, the impoverished Skopje suburb, felt

that his membership in a political party had enhanced his opportunities to make his voice heard. The situation was rather different with Lela residing in Debra who felt his membership to a political party had not rewarded him much, it had neither provided him with the job nor the contacts he expected. Empowerment is a rather abstract concept for a number of different process and expectations. The case studies indicate that these processes have to be made more concrete and visible if an improved understanding of poverty is to be achieved. How, when, where and in what public and volunteer organisations do poor individuals and households participate in trying to influence their social and economic environment? Access, effects and control of information and resources are three main interconnected variables in understanding the process of empowerment of the different categories of the poor.

The families residing in Debar, receiving resources from their relatives living in United States or Switzerland, emphasise the fact that poverty and opportunities for change and entrepreneurship must also be viewed in a global context.. Money and goods are transferred by friends and relatives living overseas to many of the poorer households in Macedonia. These remittances obviously create opportunities to improve the standard of living in the short perspective. But they also create dependency on external resources and, quite often, a sense that little can be achieved inside the country and that the only available solution to the current difficulties is to leave the country and start to work and settle in Western Europe or the United States. To understand these processes would be essential for a qualitative analysis of different aspects of poverty and livelihood.

Lastly, most official documents on poverty in Macedonia show a strong tendency to portray poor people in a numerical mode as a category of passive and deprived people. However, the enterprising Roma family in Skopje shows that individuals, households and communities are *actors and managers*, producing and combining their limited resources in different ways in order to survive. Agency and managerial skills are required in order survive in a difficult environment and a poverty analysis should identify and analyse these different skills and strategies and variety of undertakings that households devise to generate multiple income streams in the absence of employment.

Appendix A

Part 1: Overview of the Methodology of Selected Documents on Macedonia

	Holistic Vision	Participatory Process in the Report	Voices of the Poor Appear	Definition of Poverty	Sources Cited	Poverty Reproduction and Risks Analyzed	Trends in Poverty Processes Discussed	Identifies Possible Project Interventions	Identifies Local Initiatives
UNDP	No	No	No	70% below median income	2002 Census	Yes	Yes	Policy Agenda	No
UNICEF	No	Focus Groups	No	No	Various	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
World Bank Documents	No	Focus Groups	No	60% below median income	Household Budget Survey	Yes	Yes	Policy Suggestions	No
I-PRSP	No	No	No	60% below median income	Household Budget Survey	No	Yes	Detailed View of Ongoing Projects	No
European Union Documents	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	EU Harmonization	No
Sida Country Strategy	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Ongoing Projects	No

Part 2: Discussion Matrix for Selected Documents and Topics on Macedonia

	Access to Employment		Access to Education		Health		Household Living Conditions		Access to the Informal Sector		Political Representation		Employment		Household decision-making		Local Representation		Access to Assets		Household Survival Strategies		Economic Expansion		Access to Natural Resources		Domestic Crises and Shocks		Trends in Poverty Reduction Processes		Poverty Reproduction and Risk		Males Policy / Program Recommendations	
	UNDP	2	UNDP	2	UNDP	1	UNDP	1	UNDP	3	UNDP	3	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	3	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	2	UNDP	0	UNDP	3
Community/ Nation	UNICEF	2	UNICEF	2	UNICEF	1	UNICEF	2	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	3		
	WB	3	WB	3	WB	3	WB	1	WB	3	WB	0	WB	1	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	2	WB	2	WB	3		
	I-PRSP	2	I-PRSP	2	I-PRSP	2	I-PRSP	2	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	1	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	3		
	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	3		
	Sida	0	Sida	0	Sida	0	Sida	0	Sida	0	Sida	0	Sida	0	Sida	0	Sida	0	Sida	0	Sida	0	Sida	0	Sida	0	Sida	0	Sida	0	Sida	3		
Gender	UNDP	2	UNDP	2	UNDP	1	UNDP	1	UNDP	2	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	2	UNDP	2	UNDP	2
	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	2	UNICEF	1	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	2	UNICEF	1	UNICEF	1
	WB	2	WB	1	WB	0	WB	0	WB	3	WB	0	WB	1	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	2	WB	0	WB	2	WB	1
	I-PRSP	1	I-PRSP	1	I-PRSP	1	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0
	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0
Children	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0
	UNICEF	3	UNICEF	3	UNICEF	3	UNICEF	2	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	2	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	1	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	2	UNICEF	3	UNICEF	3
	WB	0	WB	3	WB	1	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0
	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	1	I-PRSP	1	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0
	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0	EU	0
Youth	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	2	UNDP	2	UNDP	2
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	I-PRSP	1	I-PRSP	1	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0
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Aged / Pensioners	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	1	UNDP	0	UNDP	0
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	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	2	WB	0	WB	0	WB	2	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	1	WB	0	WB	1	WB	1
	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0
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Disabled	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0
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	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0
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Refugees/Displaced	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0
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Ethnic Affiliation	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0
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	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0
	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0
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Rural/ Urban	UNDP	3	UNDP	3	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	2	UNDP	0	UNDP	3	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	3	UNDP	2	UNDP	3
	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	2	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	0	UNICEF	2	UNICEF	2	UNICEF	2
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	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0
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Competition Between Groups of Poor	UNDP	2	UNDP	2	UNDP	0	UNDP	2	UNDP	1	UNDP	2	UNDP	3	UNDP	0	UNDP	3	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	0	UNDP	2	UNDP	2	UNDP	0
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	WB	1	WB	1	WB	0	WB	0	WB	2	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0	WB	0
	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0	I-PRSP	0
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Ranking Keys:	
0	No mention
1	Mention
2	Brief discussion
3	Some analysis

Abbreviations of Documents:	
UNDP	National Human Development Report, 2004.
UNICEF	UNICEF FYR Macedonia. <i>Situation Analysis of Children and Families</i> , 2000.
WB	<i>Focusing on the Poor: The World Bank</i> , 1999.
IFSP	<i>Powerful Reduction Strategy Paper (Interim Version)</i> , 2000.
EU	European Partnership Agreement with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and FRY/VOY Stabilization and Association Report, 2004
StU	Country strategy for development cooperation with Macedonia

Appendix B

List of Documents Studied

1. Country strategy for development cooperation with Macedonia, January 2003 – December 2005, Sida
2. Proposal for a COUNCIL DECISION on the principles, priorities, and conditions contained in the European Partnership with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Presented by the Commission of the European Communities, 2004)
3. Commission Staff Working Paper FYROM Stabilization and Association Report 2004
4. Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (Interim Version) November, 2000
5. Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Focusing on the Poor. 1999, The World Bank
6. FYR Macedonia. Situation Analysis of Children and Families. 2000, Unicef, Skopje Office.
7. National Human Development Report 2004, FYR Macedonia Decentralization for human development. UNDP
8. FYR Macedonia: Poverty Assessment. Concept Paper, working draft, 2004, The World Bank
9. Poverty in Macedonia: What we know, what we don't, and what we should, draft for discussion by Ruslan Yemtsov, ECSPE, 2004, The World Bank

Appendix C

Terms of Reference: Pilot study on poverty and key documents in programming development cooperation in Macedonia

Background

Sida has been giving bilateral support to social projects in the countries of South Eastern Europe since the mid-nineties. The support has not been a large one but will be increasing, in line with the goals of the countries concerned and with their PRSP's or equivalent documents. It will also be in line with a poverty reduction perspective, the main goal of Swedish development co-operation being to create pre-conditions for poor people to improve their living conditions. Further, the Letter of Appropriation for 2004 to Sida (regleringsbrevet) states that social projects shall have a priority in these countries.

At this time there is need for an informed discussion about the future direction of the Swedish development co-operation in the region in order to draw a set of guidelines for future work in the social sector.

This discussion and the subsequent guidelines for a broader support are to be based on three different studies, all to be undertaken during the fall of 2004.

The first study is presently being carried out and is to focus on the social systems in the countries of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo³ and Albania.

The second study is the present one and will focus on what is presently known about poverty and poor groups of women, men, youth and children in the region, and what is not yet known concerning the present poverty situation. The study is to be based on key documents used in programming development assistance.

The third study is to be an evaluation of the work of the NGO "Kvinna till Kvinna", its support to womens' organisations in the different countries and of what can be discerned through these organisations about the situation of poor women in the region.

This three-legged approach should provide a number of aspects and different angles from which to view the social situation in the countries of South Eastern Europe and to discuss the forms of future cooperation in the social sphere.

Purpose of the assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to give Sida an informed basis for discussion, leading up to a set of guidelines for the future bilateral cooperation in the social sector in the countries of South Eastern Europe.

³ Kosovo is here to be regarded as a separate system.

This particular study is planned to be the first in a series of five country studies and a comparison between them. It is to be followed by similar studies on Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Albania. Its specific purpose is to discuss how poverty, which has been spreading in South Eastern Europe during the 1990s, is represented in certain key documents, commonly used when programming development assistance. The focus will be which groups and categories of people are poor in the region.

Scope of the Assignment and methodology

The study on Macedonia is to be seen as a pilot study. The methodology will continuously be discussed in order to arrive at the best method to make subsequent studies of the other four countries. Methodological questions will also be discussed throughout the assignment as a whole in order to take care of issues arising out of difference and variation in the the countries to be studied and the key documents in question. The four other studies should be carried out as soon as possible after the first one, during the fall of 2004. A comparison between them may also give cases of “best practice” and lessons learned in analysing and describing poverty at this level.

The assignment as a whole should be complete by the middle of December 2004.

The pilot study of Macedonia is to be comprised of two parts: 1) a desk study of 6 key documents commonly used in programming development cooperation to Macedonia and 2) a series of in-depth interviews to be conducted with poor people in Macedonia in order to investigate complementary ways of how to analyse/give a picture of the situation of poor people in the country.

1) In the desk study the key documents will be:

- the Interim PRSP – National Strategy for Poverty Reduction in the Republic in Macedonia 2002
- World Bank: to be agreed with our field office
- UNDP: Human Development Report on Macedonia 2004
- UNICEF: to be agreed with our field office
- EU: FYROM: Stabilisation and Association Report 2004 and the Partnership Agreement with Macedonia
- the Swedish Country Strategy

A short account of how poverty is defined in each document should be given, comparing the definitions. The study should specifically look at how poverty is described in terms of different groups and categories of poor people and the intersectionality between these groups or categories:

The variables to be used are:

- poor women and men (gender),
- children, youth and the elderly (age),
- ethnic groups but not only in minority terms (ethnicity) and
- geographical location
- level of poverty (socioeconomic group)

Out of such a scrutiny should emerge how levels of poverty vary between

men and women, between different age groups, between socio-economic and ethnic groups as well as information concerning the situation for poor people in different parts of the country. Also, information on difference and variation as well as on hierarchies and relations of power between and within groups may emerge, as well as the positions of different categories of people with regard to control over assets and resources.

The actual knowledge that these documents contain concerning the present poverty situation in one country will be as important to identify as the gaps of knowledge. Identifying such gaps may lead to a discussion on what more information is needed in order to make informed decisions on future support.

The sources of the facts contained in the documents should be identified, if possible, and compared between documents as well as similarities and differences.

2) A series of in-depth interviews with poor people shall be conducted in Macedonia during the first week of November. These interviews will be conducted with representatives from different social and economic categories in order to provide additional qualitative and complementary information of use in this context. The individuals will represent poor people from representative socio-economic groups in urban-rural environments, gender, different geographical and ethnic environments as well as different age groups. The interviews will be based on contrasts and similarities between and among these categories.

3) Questions to be answered in the study

The study shall be open-ended as to the methodology used and methods will continuously be discussed between the consultant and Sida during the assignment with a view to arriving at the best possible method in carrying out the other four studies, where methodology will continue to be discussed. As a point of departure, the following questions should be answered:

- The origin and intended use of each document? A brief account.
- Participatory processes in describing poverty or not? A brief account.
- How is poverty defined in the different documents? A comparison.
- Are trends in the poverty situation described, and described dynamically? A comparison between documents.
- Is there a poverty perspective mainstreamed throughout the documents and is this in terms of groups and categories of poor people? If not, where is it present and where is it not?
- Which are the sources of the facts and indicators of poverty on which the documents rely? Are they possible to identify? Discuss this.
- Do the different documents use sources that differ from one another or approximately the same? Discuss relevance, uniformity and diversity.
- Which groups of poor people are present in the documents?⁴
How are they described? Which parameters are used? How visible are they in terms of gender, age, ethnicity and geographical location? Are there any details about more prosperous categories of women and men?

⁴ Such as displaced persons, trafficked men, women or children, refugees, different categories of minorities and youth: young women and men.

- Is there any interaction between the variables gender, age, ethnicity, geographical location and level of poverty in the texts when describing different groups of poor people?
- Which groups of apparent relevance in this context are missing? A discussion of the importance of these groups in the context of poverty assessments.
- Judging from the desk study and the interviews, which particular issues would be useful to explore in a later comparison with the four other countries?

4) Practicalities

The Consultant shall review the relevant documentation available at Sida in Stockholm and retrieve missing parts from the internet and other sources.

The Consultant shall make a field visit to Macedonia in order to conduct a series of in-depth interviews.

The Consultant shall be responsible for the practical arrangements in conjunction with the field trip.

Methodological questions should be discussed between Sida and the Consultant during meetings at least twice during this assignment.

5) Expected conclusions

- A brief account of the origin of each particular document, the process that has lead up to it and its *raison d'être*.
- An analysis and a problem-oriented discussion of how poverty (in very brief terms) is presented and, more specifically, how poor groups of people are represented in the five key documents used in programming development co-operation in Macedonia.
- An account of the ways poverty is defined especially in terms of poor groups and categories of people, also in relation to more prosperous groups. This should also say something about the visibility of hierarchies and relations of power in the documents, as well as control over assets and resources
- Identification of which groups of poor people are described in the documents and how, and of which groups or categories are not represented.
- Identification of apparent gaps of knowledge in this context, whereby possible need for further information can be pin-pointed.
- A discussion of the sources used in representing poverty in these documents
- A comparison between the different documents in all these respects; Cases of “best practice”
- Conclusions from the series of interviews with poor people in Skopje, drawing attention to what should be added in a representation of how poverty varies among different groups of people.
- A short assessment of the methodology used in the study on Macedonia should be made at the end of the assignment to be used in the subsequent studies.
- Using the Swedish Country Strategy for Macedonia as a point of departure: Possible areas of cooperation emerging out of this analysis.

6) Work plan and schedule

The desk study shall be carried out in 15 days in September-October 2004 and the series of interviews in 5 days in Skopje at the beginning of November 2004.

The assignment is to be carried out by two consultants, one of these to be assigned by the main consultant.

This assignment is to be followed by similar studies on Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Albania. The complete study shall be presented in a draft form at the latest on 15 December 2004.

7) Reporting

The report shall be written in English and not exceed 15 pages, excluding annexes, attachments and the executive summary. The draft report shall be submitted to Sida electronically by 5 November. Within 2 weeks after receiving Sida's comments on the draft report, a final version shall be submitted to Sida, again electronically and in 5 hard copies.

The following enclosures shall be attached to the final report:

- terms of reference
- list of documents studied
- list of persons interviewed

Halving poverty by 2015 is one of the greatest challenges of our time, requiring cooperation and sustainability. The partner countries are responsible for their own development. Sida provides resources and develops knowledge and expertise, making the world a richer place.



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